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THE GREATER MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

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EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE" "THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND "THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"

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THE GREATER MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

MOSES.

I.

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The Israelites in Egypt.

As the time of the promise drew nigh, which God vouchsafed unto Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till there arose another king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our race, and evil entreated our fathers.—Acts vii. 17–19.

Between the latest scene in Genesis and the opening scene in Exodus lies a great silence, broken only by the sighing and the groans of the people whose ancestors had, generations before, been welcomed for Joseph's sake to the land of Egypt. Crushed and in a foreign land, they are learning the vicissitudes of life that they may learn the grace and power of their God. In the background of their sorrow lies the Promised Land—a dear memory and a forlorn hope. Yet back to that land they must be brought; for it is there, after the discipline of Egypt, that they will do the work for the world which God has given them to do. So, in His own wondrous way, God raises up Moses, a truly gigantic figure; next to our Lord perhaps the most important personality in the history of religion.

It is our purpose to study the history of this man Moses. Where do we find it? What are the sources for his life and his work? Let us seek a short answer to that question first of all.

I.

The Sources for the History of Moses.

1. The principal source is the Pentateuch. The last four books of the Pentateuch are occupied either with the history of Moses or with the laws and instructions which are associated with his name. Now the legislation of the Pentateuch is consistently represented as given for a special purpose; its aim, stated in

general terms, is to raise up a holy people for Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, and to keep this people distinct from the nations around them. The history, into which the legislation is now fitted as a jewel in its setting, tells of Jehovah's choice of Israel to be His own special and "peculiar" people. Thus history and legislation are found to blend into a harmonious whole, giving to the books of the Pentateuch an unmistakable unity of thought and purpose.

But unity after all is a relative term. A general unity of plan and purpose may be, and often is, found in a work made up of contributions by several authors agreeing in their general attitude to the subject under discussion, while differing from each other in their way of presenting it, and in the emphasis which they lay on its different parts. The Pentateuch, it is now maintained, is neither the work of a single author, nor even the product of a single age, but a compilation from a number of older and originally independent works, separated from each other in date by several centuries.

Let us set down, as briefly as possible, the several documents which modern literary criticism claims to have discovered in the Pentateuch. The two oldest sources are those now commonly known as "J" and "E"—the former, called "J" on account of its author's almost exclusive use of the sacred name Jehovah, written probably in Judah in the ninth century B.C., and the latter, called "E" on account of the preference for *Elohim* ("God"), written probably a little later in the Northern Kingdom. The principal materials out of which the two narratives were constructed were partly *oral tradition*, and partly *written laws*. Excerpts from these two sources were combined together, so as to form a single continuous narrative (JE), by a compiler, or redactor (R^{JE}), who sometimes at the same time made slight additions of his own, usually of a hortatory or didactic character, and who lived probably in the early part of the seventh century B.C. The parts derived from J and E are in tone and point of view akin to the writings of the great prophets: the additions which seem to be due to the compiler approximate in both style and character to Deuteronomy (seventh century B.C.). Another source is the one which, from the priestly interests conspicuous in it, is commonly denoted by "P": this is evidently the work of a

priestly school, whose chief interest it was to trace to their origin, and embrace in a framework of history, the ceremonial institutions of the people. The fourth document is the Book of Deuteronomy. The kernel of this book, to which the symbol "D" strictly belongs, and as to the extent of which there is some difference of opinion, is identified with the Book of the Law discovered in the Temple in the eighteenth year of Josiah (622 B.C.). It formed the basis of the religious reform undertaken by him as recorded in 2 Kings xxii.–xxiii.

¶ Those who desire to view the Pentateuch in its *historical perspective*, should think of it as a series of *strata*: the oldest and lowest stratum consisting of JE—for J and E, as they are very similar in character and tone, may, for many practical purposes, be grouped together as a single stratum—expanded here and there by additions made by R^{JE}; the second stratum consisting of the discourses of Deuteronomy, written in the seventh century B.C., and combined with JE not long afterwards; and the third and latest stratum consisting of P.[1]

¶ Of these sources J is obviously the oldest, and most nearly represents the ancient popular tradition concerning the events of the Exodus; but it must be borne in mind that both J and E are parted by a gulf of some centuries from the incidents which they record, and in point of fact embody the ideas of a late age respecting Moses and his work.[2]

2. Are there any other sources for the life of Moses? What about the Egyptian monuments? Not much can be said of the testimony of the inscriptions to the Oppression and the Exodus. Of course, those who accept these facts as narrated in the Book of Exodus will find in the inscriptions interesting antiquarian and topographical illustrations of them; but those who seek *corroboration* of the facts from the monuments will be disappointed. There is certainly no sufficient reason for questioning that the Israelites were long resident in Egypt, that they built there the two cities Pithom and Raamses, and that afterwards, under the leadership of Moses, they successfully escaped from the land of bondage: but none of these facts are vouched for by the inscriptions at present known. The discovery of the site of Pithom,

[1] S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, xii.
[2] R. L. Ottley, *The Religion of Israel*, 27.

for instance, valuable as it is archæologically, is not evidence that the Israelites built the town. The mention in inscriptions of other persons passing to and fro by Succoth and Etham is not evidence that the Israelites left Egypt by that route—or indeed that they left Egypt at all. What we know about "Goshen" is consistent with the residence there of a comparatively small band of foreign settlers, but not (as Professor Sayce has pointed out) with the numbers which, according to the Pentateuch, resided in it at the time of the Exodus. The utmost that can be said is that, from the fact of the topography of the first two or three stations of the Exodus being in agreement with what the monuments attest for the age of the nineteenth dynasty, a presumption arises that the tradition was a well-founded one which brought the Israelites by that route.

¶ There is nothing, perhaps, more disappointing, alike to the Biblical student and to the Egyptologist, than the fact that neither in the almost Semitic region of Goshen, nor in the whole land of Egypt, has, so far, any reference whatever been traced on any single monument to the sojourn of the Israelites or their escape from bondage. We are not unnaturally surprised, when the incidents loom so large in the life-history of the Jewish nation, and indeed in the history of the world. The Egyptians, who have left several notices of the movements of tribes in this very region of Goshen, are absolutely silent as to the coming and departure of the Israelites.[1]

3. Josephus (*c. Apion*) gives certain traditions as to the Exodus preserved by Manetho, an Egyptian priest and historian of Heliopolis, during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, B.C. 285–246. Manetho is quoted as stating that a priest of Heliopolis, named Osarsoph, afterwards Moses, raised a revolt of persons afflicted by leprosy and other foul diseases, who had been settled on the borders to deliver Egypt from the pollution of their presence. They were defeated and driven out of Egypt into Syria by Amenophis king of Egypt. In chap. xxxii. a similar story is quoted from Chœremon, the leaders of the Jews being Moüses Tisithen and Joseph Peteseph. In chap. xxxiv. a third version of the story is quoted from Lysimachus. According to Josephus, Manetho stated that Jerusalem was built by the followers of

[1] L. E. Steele, in *The Irish Church Quarterly*, i. 126.

shepherd kings, Hyksos, when they were expelled from Egypt by Tethmosis. He apparently regarded these Hyksos as the ancestors of the Israelites. It has sometimes been maintained that the story of the expulsion of the lepers is a truer version of the Exodus than that given in the Old Testament; and some who reject Manetho's main story quote his names of persons and places. It is safer to regard his and other narratives as mere perversions of the Biblical account.

¶ In many wild, distorted forms, the rise of this great name, the apparition of this strange people, was conceived. Let us take the brief account—the best that has been handed down to us—by the careful and truth-loving Strabo. "Moses, an Egyptian priest, who possessed a considerable tract of Lower Egypt, unable longer to bear with what existed there, departed thence to Syria, and with him went out many who honoured the Divine Being. For Moses maintained and taught that the Egyptians were not right in likening the nature of God to beasts and cattle, nor yet the Africans, nor even the Greeks, in fashioning their gods in the form of men. He held that this only was God,—that which encompasses all of us, earth and sea, that which we call Heaven, and the Order of the world, and the Nature of things. Of this who that had any sense would venture to invent an image like to anything which exists amongst ourselves? Far better to abandon all statuary and sculpture, all setting apart of sacred precincts and shrines, and to pay reverence, without any image whatever. The course prescribed was, that those who have the gift of good divinations, for themselves or for others, should compose themselves to sleep within the Temple; and those who live temperately and justly may expect to receive some good gift from God, these always, and none besides." These words, unconsciously introduced in the work of the Cappadocian geographer, occupying but a single section of a single chapter in the seventeenth book of his voluminous treatise, awaken in us something of the same feeling as that with which we read the short epistle of Pliny, describing with equal unconsciousness, yet with equal truth, the first appearance of the new Christian society which was to change the face of mankind. With but a few trifling exceptions, Strabo's account is, from this point of view, a faithful summary of the mission of Moses. What a curiosity it would have roused in our minds, had this been all that remained to us concerning him! That curiosity we are enabled to gratify from books which lay within Strabo's reach, though he cared not to read them.[1]

[1] A. P. Stanley, *History of the Jewish Church*, i. 91.

4. An immense mass of traditions gathered round Moses. Many of these are collected in Josephus, *Ant.* II.–IV., *c. Apion*; Philo, *Vita Moysis*; Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 9; in the Targums and rabbinical commentaries; and in the pseudepigraphal works ascribed to Moses. Traditions are also found in the Koran, and in other Arabian works. It is possible that there may be in this wilderness of chaff some grain of fact not otherwise known; but, speaking generally, the student of Old Testament history may set the whole on one side.

5. There remain the references to Moses in the New Testament. The New Testament makes frequent reference to the history of Moses. For the most part, however, it adds nothing to the Old Testament narrative. In some instances it follows a text differing from the Massoretic Text, or a tradition varying from the Pentateuch, but these differences do not affect the general history of Moses.

¶ The New Testament constantly refers to the law of Moses, and to Moses as the founder of Old Testament religion, and refers to the Pentateuch as "Moses" (Luke xvi. 29). His prophetical status is recognized by the quotation in Acts iii. 22. At the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appear as the representatives of the Old Testament dispensation, and Christ and they speak of His approaching death as an "exodus" (Luke ix. 31; cf. 2 Pet. i. 15). While the New Testament contrasts the law with the gospel, and Moses with Christ (John i. 17, etc.), yet it appeals to the Pentateuch as bearing witness to Christ (Deut. xviii. 15–19, in Acts vii. 37) in a way which implies that what Moses was to the old, Christ is to the new, dispensation. Similarly, the comparison between Moses and Christ in Heb. iii. 5, 6 implies that, though Christ was greater than Moses, He was, in a sense, a greater Moses, and that Moses was a forerunner and prototype of Christ.[1]

II.

Their Historical Value.

1. There are a few scholars who deny that Israel was ever in Egypt, but the majority recognize the strength of the tradition, which is found in all the sources, and which was so confidently

[1] W. H. Bennett, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, iii. 447.

believed in the later Hebrew times. Besides, nothing would be more natural than that wandering clans of southern Palestine should look with eager eyes to the rich lands of Egypt, and should seek opportunity in time of some famine stress to make a settlement across the Egyptian frontier. It is highly probable, therefore, that some of those peoples that later formed the Hebrew nation were permitted thus to settle in north-eastern Egypt. It would then be natural enough that the Palestinian wars of Rameses II. and his treaty with the Hittites would cause him to be somewhat distrustful of a considerable band of Asiatics on his border. His gigantic building operations called for large levies of workmen; so he may well have enslaved the people whose independence was a source of danger. Naville's identification of Pithom as a city built in Goshen in the reign of Rameses II. lends historical probability also to the story.

¶ What are our grounds for believing that any Israelitic tribes were at one time settled in Egypt? I shall mention two principal reasons:—Firstly, the tradition is not confined to any one part or time, but represents a continuous, abiding Israelitish belief. It is mentioned by all the chief chroniclers of the Book of Exodus and by all the prophets from Amos down. Such a confident and uniform tradition deserves every attention, and should not be ignored unless we have excellent reasons for doing so. Secondly, it would be difficult to find a nation which is so self-reliant as the Jewish. If, then, the Jewish tradition introduces their history by referring to so great a humiliation as the subjugation of the nation by the Egyptians, the sojourn in the "house of bondage," as it is often called, it would be very strange if the Jews merely invented this story. If they only desired to make a beginning to their history, they would certainly have adopted different means. How easy it would have been for the fictitious legend to spare Israel this black blot in their past! This is a strong proof that the sojourn of Israelitic tribes in Egypt is a historical fact.[1]

2. May we further believe that Moses is historical? In general, modern Old Testament scholars are agreed to regard Moses as a historical personality; but there are some who oppose this view.

(1) Cheyne may be taken as a representative of those who deny the historical existence of Moses. His latest and clearest

[1] R. Kittel, *The Scientific Study of the Old Testament*, 169.

statement is as follows: "If we are to be really strict in our criticism, the historicity of Moses must be abandoned. The force of personality in the religious as well as in the political sphere I heartily admit, but the wielders of this great weapon are not always easily discovered except by romancers. Prof. Volz remarks that 'we cannot help placing a person at the beginning of the moral religion of Israel, and as such we accept the Moses whom popular tradition offers to us.' There may not, he admits, be strong literary-critical grounds for the historicity of Moses, but to neutralize this fact he appeals to the analogy of Christianity. It is not, he says, the so-called 'salvation-facts' of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on which the Christian religion is really based, but His personality. Just so, it was not the Exodus on which the new Yahweh religion was really based, but the personality of Moses—a personality shaped and moulded by inner experiences. Of these experiences of Moses there are no strictly historical records, but who cannot sympathize with those narrators of Israel's religion who, wanting a founder, involuntarily thought of that great and almost superhuman hero whose lineaments were still present to the imagination?"[1]

(2) That Moses is a historical person, says Kittel, is proved by the description—assumed to be historical—of the state of affairs at the time of the Exodus. The tribes which were dwelling in Egypt were a disorganized crowd, a conglomeration of isolated families, each taking its own course, without any idea of patriotism or of unity. These were first inspired into the people by Moses, who in this way accomplished a deed of incalculable importance to the race. He instilled into them strength, courage, and enthusiasm, and inspired them to oppose the Egyptians. Whenever a whole nation begins to be formed from a group of tribes and clans, it is not the work of the tribes themselves, but that of an individual, who imparts his own enthusiasm to the crowd. Italy did not combine of its own accord, but Cavour created the united Italy; it was not the German tribes who effected the German Empire, but Bismarck inspired them to bring it about. If tradition said nothing of such a person as Moses, we would have to assume his existence;

[1] T. K. Cheyne, *The Two Religions of Israel*, 71.

since the tradition is definite and positive on this point, we are compelled to accept it as historical.[1]

We need not insist upon the symmetrical exactitude of the thrice forty years into which his career is distributed. We need not analyse, or rationalize, the details of the warning plagues. We may associate all the minuter prescriptions of the Law, which fill the "Books of Moses," with the Exile or the Return rather than with the Wanderings in the Wilderness; but behind them all we discern the imperishable figure of the man who, as leader, prophet, lawgiver, led his people forth from the land of bondage to the confines of the Promised Land, who transformed a multitude of slaves into a commonwealth of freedmen, and who established them for ever in a law, a worship, and a faith, through which has been wrought out the redemption of mankind. "Thou leddest thy people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron."[2]

¶ In the Old Testament there are presented to us the varying fortunes of a Semitic people who found their way into Palestine, and were strong enough to settle in the country in defiance of the native population. Although the invaders were greatly in the minority as regards numbers, they were knit together by an *esprit de corps* which made them formidable. And this was the outcome of a strong religious belief which was common to all the branches of the tribe—the belief that every member of the tribe was under the protection of the same God, Jehovah. And when it is asked from what source they gained this united belief, the analogy of other religions suggests that it probably resulted from the influence of some strong personality. The existence and character of the Hebrew race require such a person as Moses to account for them.[3]

¶ Moses is, beyond all doubt, a historical character, and it is impossible to understand the rise of nation or worship apart from him. Had his name perished and his very existence been blotted out from the memory of his countrymen, we should have been obliged to postulate a personality such as his. The character of Hebrew revelation demands no less. The definite transition from some form of animism to the service of a personal God, who chooses the tribes of Israel, making them one with each other because they were one in loyalty to Him, and revealing to them His character in the way by which He led them, cannot have

[1] R. Kittel, *The Scientific Study of the Old Testament*, 170.

[2] G. H. Rendall, *Charterhouse Sermons*, 24.

[3] A. H. McNeile, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* (Single-volume), 633.

been effected save by a great religious genius. We have a parallel case in the Persian religion, which is so different from nature worship that we cannot, without quite undue scepticism, fail to acknowledge the influence exercised by the creative mind of Zoroaster, though our information about him is meagre in the extreme. *A fortiori* does this reasoning apply to Israel, which was dominated throughout the long course of its religious development by great teachers and reformers.[1]

¶ Every one to-day at all acquainted with matters of historical religion knows that historical and ethical religions—such as the Israelitish religion undoubtedly was—always go back to a historical personality in their Founder. On the other hand, nature religions and astral religions never go back to a Founder, for they were not founded but grew.[2]

(3) But while the denial that Moses was a real person is scarcely within the bounds of sober criticism, it does not follow that all the details related of him are literally true to history.

What is the value *for history or biography* of these sources? The answer is not so simple as it might at first sight appear. It is not enough to say that a book is historically valuable in proportion as it relates with accuracy a series of facts or events. Such an answer is misleading because it confuses *history* with *chronicle*. The value, for example, of Grote's *History of Greece* would be seriously diminished if not destroyed, if there were substituted for it an accurate table of all the events related in it in their correct order with dates. A bare record of past events is of little use for the present. What the reader of history needs above everything is to learn the *meaning* of the events—their effect on the life of nations, on the life of individuals, on the relations of one country or race with another. He wants to know the place which actions held with regard to development, social progress, religious advance; how they influenced the character of the actors; the motives which led the actors to do what they did—and so forth. Thus true history is written not for mere information but for instruction, that the readers may learn what to imitate and what to avoid, how to act under given circumstances and how not to act. For this purpose a list of events is useless. The writers select their material, and arrange

[1] W. E. Addis, *Hebrew Religion*, 61.
[2] J. S. Banks, in *The Expository Times*, xviii. 452.

and comment. They present history as it appeals to them in its character of a guide for the future. This is true of all history; and Israelite history is not an exception. The writers of the Book of Numbers selected such material as seemed to them important, and presented it in such a way as to afford instruction to their readers. As has been said already, the earliest of them probably had access to an older body of traditions. And these traditions were of very varying degrees of accuracy. But whether they were accurate or not, and whether the writers repeated them accurately or not, the lessons which they embodied could be utilized. Thus it is that great caution must be exercised in the attempt to decide how much of the narrative in the Book of Numbers actually took place in the lifetime of Moses. The tendency in all ages has been to allow full play to folklore, legend, and imagination, when dealing with a great hero of far-off days. The impression produced by past traditions leads to the laying on of fresh colouring which heightens the impression. And writers who compiled their narratives with a purpose that was primarily religious would be likely to select just those details which contributed the most striking touches to the great portrait. This is true both of the facts of Moses' life and of the legislation which was ascribed to him. The decisions on social and religious matters which he must have given during the years of his leadership appear to have been of so striking and elevated a character that his fame as a lawgiver was never forgotten; and it became customary, throughout the whole history of the nation, to assign to his initiative all law—moral, social, and religious. It is impossible, therefore, to decide with certainty whether any given command can be traceable to him. The writer knew of it as a regulation or custom in force when he wrote; but how much older it may be can only be conjectured from the nature of the command itself, or from a comparison of it with other parts of the legislation, or with the customs of other nations at a similar stage of development.[1]

¶ We cannot press details; but it is hypercritical to doubt that the *outline* of the narratives which have thus come down to us by two channels is historical. The narratives of J and E cannot be mere fictions: those wonderful pictures of life, and

[1] A. H. McNeile, *The Book of Numbers*, xix.

character, and ever-varying incident, though, as we know them, they may owe something of their charm to their painters' skill, cannot but embody substantial elements of fact.[1]

¶ Whether everything that we read happened exactly as it is written, or whether the representation is more or less due to the narrators, the narrative, as a whole, possesses profound religious value, and conveys, directly or indirectly, supremely important teaching. And if Exodus is in parts a parable rather than a history, we must remember that we have no right to limit the power of God, and to say that He cannot teach by parable as well as by history, by ideals as well as by actual facts. The symbolical, and also the ideal, character of some of the Old Testament narratives must not be forgotten. Whether, in a particular case, a narrative relates actual facts or not is a question for historical criticism to decide: whatever its decision may be, the religious value of the narrative remains the same. Israel really was God's people, really did receive the blessings and privileges which, under the older dispensation, this position implied, was really led from Egypt to Canaan by a leader who was taught of God not only how to do all this, but also how to conclude a covenant with them on His behalf, and to give them laws and some knowledge of Himself, and who moreover was the first of a succession of teachers, who, with increasing clearness and power, communicated to His people further Divine truths, and held up before it high ideals of moral and spiritual life: but, if as much as this is granted,—and it lies upon the very surface of the Old Testament,—does it materially signify whether, in the Pentateuch, it is Moses who is speaking or writing, or whether it is some later prophet or priest who describes the events of the Exodus and of the journey through the wilderness as they were told, some centuries afterwards, by tradition, and who besides this traces the way in which the hand of God was visible in them, brings out the spiritual lessons implicit in them, and puts into Moses' mouth thoughts and feelings and truths about God and His relation to His people, in more explicit and articulate words than perhaps he himself would have used? There are cases, especially in the earlier books of the Old Testament, in which we cannot get behind the narratives, in which, that is, we cannot say how far the narratives correspond exactly to what was said or done by the actors in them; in these cases, however, the narrative itself is that which has the religious value, and from which spiritual and moral teaching is to be deduced. The narratives are the work of God-inspired men: and in the actions

[1] S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, xliv.

which they describe, and in the thoughts and truths expressed in them, are "profitable," sometimes by way of warning, more often by way of example and precept, and always according to the stage of spiritual illumination which each narrative represents, "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." Naturally, every part of the Book is not equally "profitable" for these purposes; but the narratives, especially those in which Jehovah and Moses are exhibited in converse together, abound in great and noble thoughts, and are rich in spiritual and devotional suggestiveness.[1]

III.

The Bondage.

1. The length of the sojourn of Israel in Egypt cannot be determined with certainty. It is fixed in Exod. xii. 40 at 430 years, with which Gen. xv. 13 approximately agrees. In the LXX, however, this period is made to include the time spent by the patriarchs in Canaan; and if value can be placed upon the genealogies given in Exod. vi. 16–20, Num. xxvi. 5–9, xxvii. 1, the number of generations from Jacob to Moses and his contemporaries amounted only to four or five (cf. Gen. xv. 16). Nor can help be obtained from Egyptian sources, as the monuments furnish little or no information respecting the Hebrews. It is probable that the migration into Egypt took place during the domination of the Asiatic Hyksos, to whom the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth dynasties are assigned. During their occupation of Lower Egypt (which, according to Manetho, lasted 511 years), they were constantly at war with the native Egyptian princes who had established themselves at Thebes; and the latter, in the time of Aames (Amosis), about 1600 B.C., succeeded in expelling them. The accession to power of a native line of rulers would naturally produce a change in the circumstances of those settlers who had been attached to, or protected by, the Hyksos; and the alteration in the attitude of the Egyptians to the Israelites, described in Exod. i., may not improbably be connected with this dynastic revolution. The Pharaoh of "the oppression," who is unnamed,

[1] S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, lxx.

was probably Rameses II., of the nineteenth dynasty. The monuments discovered at Tell el-Mashkuta, eleven or twelve miles from Ismailia, amongst the ruins of the city of Pithom, one of the two store-cities named in Exod. i. 11, show that it was for that monarch that the place was built; whilst the other city mentioned together with Pithom actually bears the name of Raamses. It was not, however, in the reign of Rameses II., but probably in that of his successor Meneptah, that Israel effected its escape. This is implied in Exod. ii. 23, and the only tradition outside the Bible which seems to relate to the departure of the Israelites assigns it to the reign of Meneptah. The dates of Rameses II. and the kings who succeeded him are variously stated; but the Exodus may be fixed approximately to 1250 or 1200 B.C.

2. Of the condition of the Israelites in Egypt, practically nothing is known beyond what can be inferred by conjecture from analogy. We must picture them as a body of settlers numbering some 5–6000 souls, settled in "Goshen," *i.e.* the fertile district at the west end of Wady Tumilat within "the triangle lying between Saft, Belbeis, and Tell el-Kebir," covering an area of about 70 square miles. These settlers will have had the same simple habits of life, with elementary institutions for the maintenance of justice and order—tribal leaders, sheikhs acting as judges, councils of elders, simple rules for the punishment of offenders, rudimentary religious observances—which are still in operation among nomad Arab tribes. In all probability they were of little importance in the eyes of the Egyptians. "In the eyes of their Egyptian contemporaries," writes Professor Sayce, "the Israelites were but one of many Shasu or Bedawin tribes who had settled in the pasture lands of the Eastern Delta. Their numbers were comparatively insignificant, their social standing obscure. They were doubtless as much despised and avoided by the Egyptians of their day as similar Bedawin tribes are by the Egyptians of the present day. They lived apart from the natives of the country, and the occupation they pursued was regarded as fit only for the outcasts of mankind." Their growing numbers made them dangerous, because, "in case of invasion, they might assist the enemy and expose Egypt to another Asiatic conquest.

Hence came the determination to transform them into public serfs, and even to destroy them altogether. The free Bedawin-like settlers in Goshen, who had kept apart from their Egyptian neighbours, and had been unwilling to perform even agricultural work, were made the slaves of the State. They were taken from their herds and sheep, from their independent life on the outskirts of the Delta, and compelled" to do field-labour, to make bricks, and build for the Pharaoh his store-cities of Pithom and Raamses.

¶ "Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal with them wisely, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us: and get them out of the land." Such are the words which the new king who knew not Joseph, when he came to the throne, spoke to his people with regard to the alien population which had been allowed during a former reign to settle in the land of Goshen, a fruitful district on the north-east of Egypt, east of Bubastis (Zakazik). It is the speech of one who feared that, if nothing were done to prevent them from becoming too powerful, they would be a source of danger to the State, as they might join, with every chance of success, in any attack which might be made on the kingdom over which he ruled. It was, in all probability, the presence of a similar foreign (Semitic) population in or near this district, about 2100 years B.C., which had contributed to—or perhaps even made—the success of the Hyksos invaders, through which Egypt had been ruled by an alien dynasty for five hundred years. The repetition of such a catastrophe was at all hazards to be prevented. It would seem, therefore, that the persecution of the Hebrews was not undertaken altogether wantonly, but with the object of turning aside a possible misfortune.[1]

3. The Israelites dwelt "in the land of Goshen." The site of Goshen has been fixed by recent discoveries. Ancient hieroglyphic lists of the "nomes" of Egypt mention *Kesem* as the twentieth nome of Lower Egypt, and state that its religious capital was *P-sapt, i.e.* the modern "*Saft* el-Henneh," a village about forty miles N.E. of Cairo, the ancient name of which Naville ascertained in 1885, from inscriptions found on the spot, to be *Kes.* "Goshen"

[1] T. G. Pinches, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 268.

must thus have been the fertile district around Saft, where the Wady Tumilat opens out at its west end towards Bubastis, "within the triangle lying between the villages of Saft, Belbeis, and Tell el-Kebir" (Naville), embracing an area of 60–80 square miles (Petrie, *Sinai*, 208), about 40–50 miles N.E. of Cairo.

¶ The modern tourist in Egypt who lands at Port Said instead of at Alexandria, and travels to Cairo by the eastern route, is well repaid for the little extra expense and time involved in the journey; for he passes through districts, towns, and villages incomparably more interesting than those through which the more direct railway runs. From Port Said to Ismailia the line skirts the great waterway of Lesseps, and from the latter town, turning sharply to the right, strikes west into the narrow valley richly nourished by the Sweetwater Canal, which from the fourteenth century before the Christian era, carried the fertilizing Nile flood into this district. It was the course of this canal which, after centuries of neglect, the great French engineer followed and reopened in many places, when he constructed the present conduit for traffic, and for the supply of fresh water to Ismailia and Suez. The appearance, therefore, of this region—a thin line of brilliant green, flanked, on either side, by an arid and tawny stretch of desert sand, above which rise the low plateaux of ancient river cliffs—is exactly such as was familiar to many an ancient Egyptian as well as to the Israelite of the bondage. Known now as the Wady Tumilat this valley runs due west for about forty miles, before it opens wide upon the rich fields of the Eastern Delta. The fascination of the district is great; for here within its narrow confines the *corvées* of Israelites endured the galling experience of forced labour, when building the two "treasure-cities" of Pithom and Raamses, and down its weary length they streamed to the great muster at Succoth, prior to their final departure for the desert. After leaving Ismailia and before we reach the little station of Mahsame—the Arab variant of Raamses—which sweeps us back in memory to the times of ancient Israel, although it is not the site of the "treasure-city" of that name, we pass the mounds of Tell-el-Mashkuta to the south of the railway and on the far side of the canal, where Naville in the year 1883 identified, beyond all question, the site of Pithom. Further on, and still to the south, is Tell-er-Retabeh, which Petrie, as the result of explorations carried out in 1905–6, claims to have determined to be the site of the long-sought second treasure-city of Raamses; and then our memories are brought back to England's share in Egypt's prosperity,

when further on we pass Kassassin and Tell-el-Kebir, the latter with its little well-kept cemetery by the rail side, where the English who died in the battle rest beneath some shady trees. Here the valley opens wide to embrace the broad plains of Goshen, and here, too, an exquisite scene of Eastern pastoral life begins. The green fields of beans and bersim are dotted with the industrious fellaheen; the shaduf and sakkieh creak and hum their not unmelodious song; strings of camels, herds of goats, black and grey water-buffaloes, graceful lebbek trees, feathery tamarisks and waving palms, complete a picture of pastoral charm. Some miles from Tell-el-Kebir, we reach the little station of Saft-el-Henneh, again a scene of Naville's labours, the mounds of which he has identified as the site of the city of Pa-Sopt, the ancient capital of the surrounding district of Kesem, Geshem, or more familiarly Goshen; and if on our map we join Tell-el-Kebir and Saft el-Henneh, and then form a triangle by linking up Belbeis to the south with both, we cannot be far wrong in identifying the space so enclosed with the area of the historic Land of Goshen.[1]

4. Of the religion of the Israelites in Egypt we have no information. "In the land of Goshen," says Robertson Smith, "the Hebrews had not even a vestige of national organization. The tribes into which they were divided acknowledged a common ancestry, but had no institutions expressive of the unity of race; and, when Moses called them to a united effort for liberty, the only practical starting-point for his work was an appeal to the name of Jehovah, the God of their fathers. It is not easy to say how far the remembrance of this God was a living power among the Hebrews. The Semitic nomads have many superstitions, but little religion. The sublime solitudes of the desert are well fitted to nourish lofty thoughts about God, but the actual life of a wandering shepherd people is not favourable to the formation of such fixed habits of worship as are indispensable to make religion a prominent factor in everyday life. It would seem that the memory of the God of the Hebrew fathers was little more than a dormant tradition when Moses began his work; and among the Israelites, as among the Arabs of the desert, whatever there was of habitual religious practice was probably connected with tribal or family superstitions, such as the use of teraphim, a kind of

[1] L. E. Steele, in *The Irish Church Quarterly*, i. 123.

household idols which long continued to keep their place in Hebrew homes. The very name of Jehovah (or Iahwè, as the word should rather be pronounced) became known as a name of power only through Moses and the great deliverance."[1]

IV.

Deliverance.

1. The primary element of the nation's consciousness was always the sense of having been redeemed and delivered at the Exodus. This was the operation of Jehovah that "created" the people. If He who calls Himself "Jehovah" declares His identity with the God of Abraham and Isaac, it was under the name Jehovah that He performed His great act of salvation, and this act both gave the people existence, and stamped indelibly on their consciousness that Jehovah was their God and made them in thankfulness avow themselves His people. The conceptions "God" and "people" are correlative—Jehovah is Israel's God from the land of Egypt (Hos. xii. 9, xiii. 4). The two principles just referred to and the fact are entirely practical.

¶ No one doubts that the history in the Book of Exodus is the history of a deliverance. The most superficial reader would say that the subject of it is the redemption of a people out of slavery. The Church has adopted this view of it so completely that we do not break the ordinary course of our reading on Palm Sunday and Easter Day. The chapters respecting the plagues which were sent to Pharaoh, respecting the Passover and the passage of the Red Sea, are our lessons on the Passion and the Resurrection. The Law of Redemption (so the Church teaches) is asserted in the Old Testament facts; is evolved and fulfilled in the facts of the New. We are not taught to look upon one as belonging to an earthly, the other to a spiritual economy, the one as merely a figure of the other. The Jewish Redemption is nothing except as it has a spiritual foundation. The Christian Redemption is nothing if its results do not affect the earth. Neither is figurative; both are substantial.[2]

2. Three vital facts sum up the real meaning of this thrilling experience. These were that the people were free, that Jehovah

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *The Prophets of Israel*, 32.

[2] F. D. Maurice, *The Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*, 154.

had freed them, and that this freedom was gained under the leadership of Moses. The first of these facts affected the later history of Israel. It gave them a sense of independence and a hatred of tyranny, which flamed out again and again in opposition to foreign rule and the exercise of arbitrary power at home. It raised up leaders who, inspired by the backward look at this stirring event, revived the people and called them to battle for their ancient liberty. The second fact made Jehovah the national God in a peculiar sense, and rooted their liberties in the sacred soil of religion. Henceforth the champions of Israel's freedom were men of God. The third fact put Moses at the head of affairs, gave him the complete confidence of the freed people, and thus granted him the opportunity of creating a nation inspired with his own lofty ideals.

¶ Fundamental to the whole history of Israel is the idea of redemption. The words of Moses to his baffled people at the Red Sea would be a fit motto for the whole Bible: "Stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah" (Exod. xiv. 13). The world is sunk in sin, and needs salvation. That is the great and ever-present fact of human life which the early chapters of Genesis resolutely face and with which they boldly grapple. The sin is sometimes hideous, as in Sodom; but, hideous or not, it is always there, provoking God not only to anger but also to redemptive thoughts. For were there no redemption, the Divine purpose in creating man would be wholly frustrated, and that must not be. Out of all mankind, a special people is elected to be the object of His special care. This is the fact; but it is not till the Exile that the reason of it is clearly felt—that Israel's privilege is meant to benefit and bless the world. It is not felt by the prophetic writers of the Hexateuch. The wider destiny of Israel's religion is indeed suggested more than once, and is implicit in its very nature, but it is not a burning fact—at once an inspiration and a consolation—as it was to Deutero-Isaiah. It is the privilege rather than the duties of election that interest the prophetic writers of the Hexateuch. They are proud of Israel's uniqueness and isolation, so obvious in the immunity she enjoyed during the plagues of Egypt, so startling as to appeal to the eyes of an unprejudiced stranger. But within the elect nation stand elect men, through whom the Divine work is to be begun and continued. The religious genius of Israel as a people must be acknowledged when we look at the heroes whom she admires, for they are men after God's own heart: men of deep and ready faith like Abraham,

whose faith God counted for righteousness; men of purity like Joseph, who could not "do this great wickedness and sin against God"; men of stern justice like Moses; men who could plead with God in prayer and prevail; men who would give up their dearest at God's command; men of sensitive conscience, who felt that of the least of God's mercies they were unworthy; men who could endure as seeing the Unseen.[1]

V.

The Uses of the Bondage in Egypt.

There can be no doubt that the Egyptian experience had much to do with the making of the Hebrew people. The union in a common misery and in a common deliverance bound them together and prepared them for their destiny. Had the Egyptian experience been more kindly, the Hebrews might have been absorbed in the complex population of the Nile valley and never have contributed their part to the world's life. The sacred writers believed that the numbers of the people increased in accordance with the promises to the fathers, and the bitterness of the bondage was the occasion for their departure to their destiny in Canaan.

1. *The sense of destiny* is strong in this history. It is a thought that is writ large in the Bible. The Hebrews cannot be exterminated, for God has destined them to a glorious future. So the prophets preached, believing in a Golden Age when Israel should be God's people indeed. And the New Testament has the same conception: "All things work together for good to them that love God." Jesus declares in Gethsemane with marvellous equanimity that twelve legions of angels could save Him from His enemies. It is a great faith a thousand times justified. We must not be fatalists, but in our measuring of causes and calculating of effects we must not leave out God. He is greater than Pharaoh.

¶ The distinction between the outer and the inner view of destiny is, as regards its practical effects, one of the most important points in ethical controversy. It was the latter aspect that braced the life of Stevenson. Destiny was constantly present

[1] J. E. McFadyen, *The Messages of the Bible*, iv. 77.

to his imagination, yet its effect was always quickening and tonic. The man's mind and will sprang to the great alliance with the mind and will of the universe, and wrought out actions and character as in a veritable sense inspired and chosen of heaven. No soul is ever great without the sense of this alliance. To explain even the most commonplace experience wholly in terms of one poor little human life, is to show that one has never realized the meaning of life at all. There is always the *surd*, the unexplained and inexplicable element beyond all that. The recognition of this is the first requisite of true manliness, and a belief in predestination of some sort is the necessary basis for any healthy view of life. Thus does the thought of destiny perform at all times a double function in the world: the bad it commits to badness, slackening all their powers of resistance, and thrusting them ever deeper into the evil of their choice; the good it braces for action, until, claiming it for their own, they are competent to face and conquer anything that life may set before them. The latter was Stevenson's course, summed up with even more than his usual appositeness in the phrase, "to waylay destiny and bid him stand and deliver." The result in character was one of the most brilliant records of human courage which are to be found anywhere in the biographies of British men.[1]

2. And so we learn *the meaning of hardship.* How much pleasanter it would have seemed to Israel to enjoy the fertility of Goshen, and to increase and multiply without hindrance in the goodly land of Egypt! A kindly Providence would have given them favour in the sight of their neighbours. Yes, and Israel would have been a nonentity in Egypt, with no place to display her strength. Satisfied with flesh-pots she could have produced no prophet. But we always murmur at the hardships that are pushing us out. We chafe at our troubles. And so should we miss our destiny.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

¶ Life itself—life dreadful, severe, monotonous, as well as life exciting, adorable, delicious, is what we need. It is the experience

[1] John Kelman, *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 217.

which we fear and yet have to conquer which helps us, not the experience which we clasp to our heart. We have to do the duties which bore us, to adjust ourselves to peevish and froward people, that we may realize that we are capable of boredom, and that we may learn that we are ourselves prejudiced and unreasonable. The strife, the censure, the annoyance which takes the heart out of one, the necessity of yielding and compromising, the fear of pain and sorrow, the failure, the blunder, the loss—these are the things which purify and strengthen, and not the pleasant loitering in the meadow beside the stream. It is the power of recollecting, combining, imagining, the power of knowing exactly what we dislike, and of reconstructing the design of life without it, which brings us suffering. But the wonder and the largeness of life all consist in the fact that it is so different from anything which we could have designed and executed. So much more unexpected, so much more imaginative, so much stronger, bigger, freer, more vehement—more real, in fact. We think of ourselves when we are young and hopeful, as we think perhaps of Odysseus, moving on through life patient, inventive, gleeful; we subtract the horror and the danger, the nakedness and the hunger, because we anticipate throughout the triumph and the victorious home-coming, ultimate triumph and the consciousness of it—that is what we demand.

And instead, what do we find?—a complex labyrinthine place, full of blind alleys and high-walled glooms; tracts of it pleasant enough, no doubt, where the road is level and grassy, and the trees dangle their fruit over the wall; but then we come to be aware of death girdling the horizon whichever way we look, like an encircling sea; and there are ugly things lying in wait, giants and pitfalls, and padding fiends with hollow voices, "great stenches," as in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, that lie across the road.

The error is, not if we feel heroic—it is all the better if we can do that—but if we feel romantic, anticipate ultimate triumph, believe that we shall find life at last golden and serene, all its victories won. Instead of that we must face disaster and failure, and last of all we know not what, by which we shall be shattered once and for all; we need not dwell in these thoughts, nor bemoan our hard fate; all that is a weakening and a wasteful thing; and the more we practise to be serene and undismayed, the less will all calamity hurt us. But we need not believe calamity and stress and pain to be wholly horrible things; we must observe them, fearlessly, feel them deeply, bear them patiently, and then they will yield their sweetness and their strength.[1]

[1] A. C. Benson, *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*, 223.

3. As we enter into the lesson of faith, we feel the great truth of *God's care for the oppressed.* We think of ourselves on the side of Israel trusting Jehovah in spite of difficulties. Let us be careful that we are not on the side of Pharaoh. Dr. C. R. Brown has strikingly used Exodus narratives to point the lesson of modern industrial oppression. It is unhappily true of our own day that task-masters are over the poor, even the women and children, to make "their lives bitter with hard service." The modern Pharaohs shall not escape the day of reckoning.

"Have ye founded your thrones and altars, then,
On the bodies and souls of living men?
And think ye that building shall endure,
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?

With gates of silver and bars of gold
Ye have fenced My sheep from their Father's fold;
I have heard the dropping of their tears
In heaven, these eighteen hundred years."

"O Lord and Master, not ours the guilt,
We build but as our fathers built;
Behold Thine images, how they stand,
Sovereign and sole, through all our land.

Our task is hard,—with sword and flame
To hold Thine earth forever the same,
And with sharp crooks of steel to keep
Still, as Thou leftest them, Thy sheep."

Then Christ sought out an artisan,
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

These set He in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garment hem,
For fear of defilement, "Lo, here," said He,
"The images ye have made of Me!"[1]

[1] Lowell, *A Parable* (*Poetical Works*, 108).

MOSES.

II.

Birth and Education.

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Birth and Education of Moses.

She saw him that he was a goodly child.—Exod. ii. 2.

In passing from Genesis to Exodus we pass from the story of men and families to the history of a nation. In Genesis the Canaanites and Egyptians concern us only as they affect Abraham or Joseph. In Exodus, even Moses himself concerns us only for the sake of Israel. He is in some respects a more imposing and august character than any who preceded him; but what we are told is no longer the story of a soul, nor are we pointed so much to the development of his spiritual life as to the work he did—the tyrant overthrown, the nation moulded, the law and the ritual imposed on it. When Jacob at Peniel wrestles with God and prevails, he wins for himself a new name, expressive of the higher moral elevation which he has attained. But when Moses meets God in the bush, it is to receive a commission for the public benefit; and there is no new name for Moses, but a fresh revelation of God for the nation to learn. And in all their later history we feel that the national life which it unfolds was nourished and sustained by these glorious early experiences, the most wonderful as well as the most inspiriting on record.

Yet we may well call this new age the Age of Moses. For, in that new stage which is now to be entered upon, the nation is coming under the influence of that majestic personality, that super-eminent genius, that "man of God," with whom but few of the sons of men have vied in intellectual and moral grandeur.

¶ The intermediate stages between the "patriarchal" period and the departure of the tribes from Egypt it is impossible to trace. What is certain is that at the period when the Hebrews invaded Palestine and drove out or subdued its Canaanitish inhabitants the tribes were united, not only by the ties of kinship, but by their common belief in a Deity called Jahveh, and that

this religion possessed elements of strength which welded the loosely-organized clans into a compact nation, and ultimately gave them a decided superiority over the Canaanites who opposed their advance. We find moreover that this type of religion held its ground after the settlement of the Hebrews in the conquered territory, and that it was tenacious and vigorous enough to withstand the disintegrating influences of heathenism to which it was exposed. To what is this striking development to be attributed? The uniform tradition of the Hebrews points to certain important historical events as the occasion, and to one commanding personality as the instrument, whereby the change was brought about. According to the narratives of the Pentateuch, the tribes migrated into Egypt and were for some centuries settled in that country. Though at first they found favour with the Egyptian monarchs, yet in process of time they sank into a condition of serfdom, which lasted until they were goaded by their sufferings to rise against their oppressors and to claim their liberty. Under the leadership of Moses, of the tribe of Levi, they made their escape from Egypt, and for more than a generation wandered as nomads in the Sinaitic Peninsula. Tradition also relates that the tribes were taught by Moses the elements of a higher religion than that which they had inherited from their ancestors, and that he was the founder of a rudimentary system of law and polity. According to the earliest account, Moses was specially commissioned by God to be the liberator and lawgiver of his fellow-tribesmen; he spoke with the authority of a prophet, and acted as mediator between the Hebrews and their God in the character of a priest.[1]

I.

The Birth of Moses.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.—Heb. xi. 23.

1. The cruel and oppressive measures taken by Pharaoh to break the spirit of the Israelites and reduce them to a condition of utter bondage, perhaps destroying them altogether, had signally failed, in that the more they were oppressed the more they increased. The king next decided on what he hoped and

[1] R. L. Ottley, *The Religion of Israel*, 25.

confidently expected would be a master-stroke. The brutality of it exceeded that of Herod, who ordered all the male children from two years old and under found in Bethlehem to be slaughtered. Herod was inspired by his fear of the Christ, and the cruelty was limited to a small community; but Pharaoh decreed the death of all the male infants of the Hebrews and, moreover, ordered them to be strangled by the midwives at the time of their birth. These women, fearing God, refused to obey the king's commandment. Enraged at this frustration of his plan, the king next ordered the parents themselves to destroy their male offspring. This was the height of cruelty, and could have been carried out only by setting watchmen and spies, house-searchers and examiners, to work. So rigidly was this brutal decree forced on them that it was almost impossible to escape its execution.

2. Now, "there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi, and the woman conceived and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months." Already two children—Miriam, a daughter, and Aaron, a son—had been given to Amram and his kinswoman, Jochebed. Something in the babe's lovely countenance appeared to the mother's eye as the halo of special Divine affection. A voice whispered to her heart that her child was specially dear to God. Was not its smile the result of the Divine embrace? And did not those limpid eyes look into the face of the Angel of the Covenant? She was therefore encouraged to brave the royal edicts, and screen the little taper from the gale of destruction that was sweeping through the land. She probably hid him for three months in the apartments reserved for the women.

¶ It was the beauty of this child: his exceeding fairness,—his fairness to God, or his being "fair to God," for that is the signification of the expression,—which more especially stimulated his parents' faith. Some suppose the beauty of the child to have been supernatural, as an indication of what was in reserve for him. Josephus describes him as "Divine in form": and the Roman historian Justin also speaks of his extraordinary beauty. There were promises too, which might have encouraged the parents to risk their own lives in the attempt to secure the life

of their child, and to rise above the fear of the king's commandment.[1]

3. For three months these God-fearing parents had succeeded in concealing their child. The searchers for hidden children were on their rounds again. Perhaps their secret had leaked out, and they knew well what would befall the babe if the searcher for male children should find him. Therefore a heroic device was speedily executed. A little basket cradle-boat was prepared, carefully made water-tight with bitumen or pitch. How tenderly and carefully the mother lined it! Then, with shrewd mother-wit, and, let us add, guided by the Spirit of God, she directed it to be placed among the rushes near to the place where the royal daughter of Pharaoh was in the habit of going daily to bathe. Little Miriam was placed near to watch events, and we may be sure the mother was not far off. A more romantic, pathetic, and thrilling situation could not well be conceived. Of course the mother could not know certainly what the daughter of Pharaoh would do; but she acted in faith, doing what seemed best as in the sight of God, making every earthly provision that human love and foresight could suggest.

Blow gently, wind! beneath the moon,
Across the river wavelets bright:
Make music like a cradle tune
Into the mother's ear to-night!

Flow, Father Nile! unvexed by storm,
And softly rock the bulrush ark,
Nor whelm the little dainty form,
A lily on thy waters dark.[2]

¶ The Basket of the Canephore was woven of rushes or reeds. In such primal ark ("scirpeus"—of rushes, *not* bulrushes), or Ark of Covenant, the first shepherd of the Jewish people is saved; and thus as the weed of the wide sea is the type of the lawless idleness which in heaven shall root itself no more on the wharf of Lethe, the flag of the river—usefullest, as humblest of all the green things given to the service of man—becomes the type of

[1] C. D. Bell, *The Roll-Call of Faith*, 182.
[2] C. F. Alexander.

the obedient shepherd sceptre, which, by the still waters of comfort, redeems the lost, and satisfies the afflicted, soul.[1]

¶ How much of the world's history that tiny coffer among the reeds held! How different that history would have been if, as might easily have happened, it had floated away, or if the feeble life within it had wailed itself dead unheard! The solemn possibilities folded and slumbering in an infant are always awful to a thoughtful mind. But, except the manger at Bethlehem, did ever cradle hold the seed of so much as did that papyrus chest? The set of opinion at present minimises the importance of the individual, and exalts the spirit of the period, as a factor in history. Standing beside Miriam, we may learn a truer view, and see that great epochs require great men, and that, without such for leaders, no solid advance in the world's progress is achieved. Think of the strange cradle floating on the Nile; then think of the strange grave among the mountains of Moab, and of all between, and ponder the same lesson as is taught in yet higher fashion by Bethlehem and Calvary—that God's way of blessing the world is to fill men with His message, and let others draw from them. Whether it be "law," or "grace and truth," a man is needed through whom it may fructify to all.[2]

She left her babe, and went away to weep,
And listen'd oft to hear if he did cry;
But the great river sung his lullaby,
And unseen angels fann'd his balmy sleep,
And yet his innocence itself might keep.
The sacred silence of his slumb'rous smile
Makes peace in all the monster-breeding Nile;
For God e'en now is moving in the sweep
Of mighty waters. Little dreams the maid,
The royal maid, that comes to woo the wave
With her smooth limbs beneath the trembling shade
Of silver-chaliced lotus, what a child
Her freak of pity is ordain'd to save!
How terrible the thing that looks so mild![3]

4. The providence of God, ever working through means, brought the princess to the river-brink at the critical moment, accompanied by the high-born maidens who constituted her personal attendants. It was His hand that guided her eye to the

[1] Ruskin, *Proserpina*, bk i. ch. v. (*Works*, xxv. 280).
[2] A. Maclaren. [3] Hartley Coleridge.

ark half concealed by the rushes; and it was at His prompting that her maid was sent to fetch it. All this came forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in effectual working. With her own hands the princess opened the lid of the little basket. It is not impossible that she guessed what its contents were. In any case, she was not surprised when she saw the babe. Was it the Hebrew physiognomy, as marked then as now, or a swift intuition, that made her exclaim, "This is one of the Hebrews' children"? Whatever it was, she was more than willing to fall in with the shrewd suggestion of Miriam that a nurse of the Hebrew race would be the more fitting to rear it. So it befell that Moses' life was saved, that he was nourished from the breasts of his own mother, and received as his earliest impressions those sacred teachings which had come down as a rich heritage from the tents of Abraham. Till he had grown probably to the age of three years, he remained under the protection of the princess, though in his parents' home, and Jochebed's wages were duly paid until he was brought to the palace and became her son. "And she called his name Moses."

The great lesson of this incident, as of so much before, is the presence of God's wonderful providence, working out its designs by all the play of human motives. In accordance with a law, often seen in His dealings, it was needful that the deliverer should come from the heart of the system from which he was to set his brethren free. The same principle that sent Saul of Tarsus to be trained at the feet of Gamaliel, and made Luther a monk in the Augustinian convent at Erfurt, planted Moses in Pharaoh's palace and taught him the wisdom of Egypt, against which he was to contend.

¶ I saw, the other day, two well-known pictures side by side in a shop window. The one represented Lord Roberts, with the inn-keeper's child on his knee at Pretoria, saying, to a member of his staff who approaches him with some message, "Don't you see I'm busy?" The other was that one in which a little child is pictured as crossing a crowded street and the policeman is holding up his hand to stop the traffic until it gets safely over. It is entitled "His Majesty the Baby." A difference might have been observed on the faces of most of the passers-by as they took a glance at the window for a few moments. They may have approached with a look of abstraction, or even a frown in their

business absorbment, but as they went away their faces were lit up by a kindly smile, and one was even seen to smile upon the somewhat troublesome importunity of several newsboys who assailed him with their cries immediately after, and reached over each other towards him with their papers. Both pictures seem to be very popular, and no wonder. They touch a tender chord in most hearts. It has been the same in all time, and all the world over. The baby always reigns. The little Moses in his bulrush cradle captivated the royal heart. There was a mightier majesty in the babe than in Pharaoh's daughter. It is said that some men are born booted and spurred to ride, and some are born saddled and bridled to be ridden. These distinctions may come out in later years, but the truth is we are all born with the boots and spurs.

Moses came by and by to rule from a nobler than his cradle throne. He made a noble decision when he was grown, a decision that involved great sacrifice; and though his brethren spurned his rule at first, they came later to prize the sacrifice he made, and the beautiful service he rendered. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant," said Jesus. In that sense Moses came to be great indeed, and in heaven they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb.[1]

5. "She called his name Moses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water." This is a case of popular etymology, examples of which we find everywhere. We are all of us familiar with the popular local derivations of the names of persons, villages, hills, and rivers. Generally they are artless attempts to interpret the names and then connect them with definite events. The events themselves may have occurred, but their connexion with the names is a figment of the imagination. The name "Moses," interpreted as a Hebrew word, would mean really "the one who draws out," *i.e.*, the deliverer, redeemer. But this is a case of the assimilation of a foreign word to the Hebrew language, influenced by the thought of Moses' life-work. The word, however, is really Egyptian, and means "son." It is the same word that we find in Egyptian compound names, *e.g.*, Dhutmoses. The fact that the leading figure in the Israelite history of this period bears not a native but a foreign name is strong proof that he is historical, and also that the Israelites did sojourn in Egypt.[2]

[1] J. S. Maver.

[2] R. Kittel, *The Scientific Study of the Old Testament*, 171.

¶ Josephus and Philo derive the name from the Coptic *mo*, "water," and *ushe*, "saved"; this is implied in their spelling *Mouses*, also found in LXX and New Testament. It is more plausible to connect the name with the Egyptian *mes*, *mesu*, "son." Perhaps it was originally coupled with the name of an Egyptian deity—cf. *Ra-mesu*, *Thoth-mes*, and others—which was omitted under the influence of Israelite monotheism.[1]

II.

His Education.

Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works.—Acts vii. 22.

1. In the history of the leader of the Exodus, the first noteworthy qualification for the work of his life is that he was representative of the two classes between whom he was to mediate. He was by birth of the kindred of the oppressed, while by upbringing and education he was connected with their oppressors. This gave him a breadth of view and of sympathy which he could not otherwise have had. His connexion with Israel, the law of whose life was the law of sacrifice, gave him depth of character and a native sympathy with things unseen; while his position in the palace of the Pharaohs gave him all that the highest civilization of the time could bestow. In him already the Israelites spoiled the Egyptians. The learning and wisdom, the might in words and in deeds, which Moses acquired in the royal household were infinitely more valuable for the enrichment of the emancipated nation than all the jewels of gold which they carried with them in their exodus.

¶ The history of every human life is profitable alike for doctrine and for reproof. When we mark the steps by which a man has been led, and the manner in which he has made or marred himself, we learn much concerning Him who shapes our ends, and much also which can be turned to practical account for our guidance or our warning. The records of even the humblest life, which has had no apparent influence beyond its own immediate circle, are thus replete with instruction. In every such life we can recognize something of the Divine Hand which

[1] A. H. McNeile, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* (Single-volume), 632.

fashions us, and something also which may help us in fashioning ourselves.[1]

2. But in the training of Moses He who shapes our ends was careful that the first place should be given to that which lays the deep and enduring foundations of character. Depth must be secured before breadth or height. Unless the roots are struck far into the soil the tree cannot afford to shoot up high or spread its branches wide to catch the influences of the sunlight and the rain. It was by arrangement of infinite wisdom that he who was to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and to be learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, should be first nursed by his own Hebrew mother.

¶ No one can calculate the value and enduring influence of the training which begins even before children have attained to the years of consciousness. We do not use a mere figure when we speak, as we so often do, of men having drunk in certain principles with their mother's milk. The mind receives impressions which often prove permanent long before it is conscious that they are being made. It could not but powerfully influence his future that in his infancy Moses looked habitually into a face in which sorrow and hope were blended. For in his mother's face there must have been that depth of sorrow which is seen only in those who have come to a heritage of wrong endured from generation to generation; and there was the hope which, rooted in the ancient promise that God would surely visit His people, had, at the birth of this goodly child, been quickened into the expectation that the hour of deliverance was at hand. When in his later life Moses saw the bush that burned and was not consumed, he but saw in symbol what he had seen in reality in his mother's face, in which hope had lived and refused to be consumed by the sorrow of the long captivity. From the reflection of that face, in which the glory of the Divine Inspirer of hope was seen, Moses' face would shine while yet he wist not of it. Let us give God thanks for our godly mothers; let us cherish them if they are with us; let us reverence their memory if they are gone; and let us recognize the unspeakable power of family life to mould the future of a nation.

3. Depth of character having been thus secured for the future lawgiver, breadth of culture and wider views of men and things

[1] James Brown, *Sermons*, 159.

than would have been attainable to one of the children of the enslaved Hebrews were added. The Jewish tradition tells that he was at once instructed in all the knowledge of the time and trained to a practical acquaintance with affairs of state—learned in wisdom, and mighty in words and in deeds. According to that tradition, he was admitted to the priestly caste, served in the temple at Heliopolis, and there became versed in the mysteries of the Egyptian religion. Such a training was unspeakably important for one who was to be called to formulate the doctrine and prescribe the ritual of a purer religion.

¶ In times of reformation those whom God raises up to lead men to juster conception of His character and purpose, and to simpler and more spiritual worship, have always been trained, and have often been peculiarly zealous, in the faith against which their later teaching was a protest. The greatest of Christian apostles, who did more than all the rest to emancipate the Church from the bondage of the letter of Judaism, had been an Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law a Pharisee; and Martin Luther, by agonizings in his cell, by pilgrimages to Rome, and by climbings of holy stairways, had sought to attain the best that the old religion could do for him, before he led a liberated Church into the simpler truth, that "the just shall live by faith."[1]

4. Thus was Moses trained and fitted for the high position to which God had called him: he was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians. Later in his life, and when he had finished with the schools, there came another training, which completed his fitness as leader of Israel. Stephen speaks of Moses as "mighty in words and in deeds"—that he occupied a foremost position in the land both as a statesman and as a warrior, foremost in influencing the course of events both at home and abroad. To the high spirits and courage of this young prince, when as yet peace principles had not begun to be advocated, it is easy to believe that the soldier's life would have a peculiar charm. Every Egyptian monarch led out his army in person and himself fought at its head. And it seemed a fitting place for the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The military glory of Egypt had lately been increased by the great victories in Asia; and now in the war with Ethiopia, Moses found scope for his skill and courage. Tradition

[1] James Brown.

has handed down to us what is merely fanciful as to his military career, but at the same time there is certainly much that confirms the words of Stephen. Moses' skill in marshalling the hosts of Israel, and in leading them through the Red Sea and the desert, in choosing the places of their encampment and in directing it—all this was doubtless largely the result of his life in the battle-field, from his twentieth to his fortieth year.

¶ Josephus gives us a romantic story that probably has some foundation, though it may be difficult to say what. "The Ethiopians, neighbours of the Egyptians upon the south, were in the habit of making inroads into their territory, and ravaging it from time to time. After a while they provoked the Egyptians to retaliate, and the latter marched an army into the land of the Ethiopians, to punish them for their insolence. But the Ethiopians gathered their forces together, and engaging the Egyptians in the open field completely defeated them, slaughtering a vast number, and forcing the rest to make a hasty and disgraceful retreat into their own country. It was now the turn of the Ethiopians to take the offensive. Following up the flying foe they crossed the border, and, not content with ravaging, proceeded to seize and occupy large portions of southern Egypt. The inhabitants did not venture on resistance; and little by little the invaders crept on towards the north, till they reached Memphis, and even the Mediterranean coast, without a single city having held out against their attack. Reduced to the depths of despair, the Egyptians had recourse to the oracular shrines, and inquired of them what it would be best to do. The reply given by the oracles—*i.e.*, by the priests who had the control of them—was: 'Use the Hebrew as your helper.' No one doubted that by 'the Hebrew' was meant Moses, or that the 'help' to be required of him was that he should take the conduct of the war. Moses accordingly was invested with the sole command, and at the head of the Egyptian troops he marched into the enemy's country, by an importation of ibises got rid of the serpents that infested it, and defeated in a decisive battle the army that was sent against him. He then went on and took city by city, everywhere overcoming the resistance that was offered to him, and slaying large numbers of the enemy. His troops, whom their reverses had disheartened, took courage so soon as they found that their new general could lead them to victory, and showed themselves excellent soldiers, ready to endure alike toil and danger."[1]

[1] Mark Guy Pearse.

5. But the training of Moses for the great work of his life could not be complete as long as he remained in the high places of Pharaoh's court. As "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," so it was necessary that the captain who was to lead the children of Israel to the glory of freedom and of a purer faith, should attain his qualification for the work through the discipline of sacrifice. The exodus he was to lead was a part of that long procession down the ages, which, beginning when Abraham left his country and his kindred and his father's house and went out not knowing whither he went, reached its goal at last when He who alone rendered the perfect sacrifice went forth without the gate bearing the cross to Calvary. It was necessary that the leader of that exodus should have as his crowning qualification the spirit of the cross; that he should be trained and called to deny himself and should make sacrifice to follow the path of duty. He had his choice to make, and he made it.

¶ My father often longed greatly for certain things, and when they were given, if we said that they were delightful, would immediately offer them to us. Some of his greatest sacrifices were relative to seemingly small things. He went through life both denying himself and lightly holding all things material, letting life's treasures, so thought the worldly man, slip past him. Thus he dealt with honours, praise, and the trinkets of Vanity Fair; and thus, losing all, he found all, and we knew at the end that he had plucked the secret out of life's mystery, that he had the Blue Bird caged and singing within his heart, that he had found a perfect peace.[1]

[1] *Love and Life: The Story of J. Denholm Brash* (1913), 157.

III.

His Choice.

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward.—Heb. xi. 24-26.

It was when Moses was grown that the great trial came which determined what was to be the spirit of his life, and what manner of man he was to be. His education had been completed. A wealth of experience and a wealth of culture had been gathered. Enriched by the influences which had surrounded his unconscious childhood, and by the learning and wisdom of Egypt which had laid their treasures at his feet, it had still to be determined whether all this rich capability was to be kindled by the Holy Spirit into a sacrifice and a service to the glory of God and for the good of his brethren; or whether it was to deaden and harden into a mere selfish possession. In the crisis which came to him, he had to decide whether he would identify himself with the suffering race who were his kindred, and whose cause was the cause of righteousness and mercy; or whether he would choose to rank on the side of their oppressors, with whom, in upbringing and position, he was already associated.

1. While the intellect of Moses was developing, it is plain that his connexion with his family was not entirely broken. Such a tie as often binds a foster-child to its nurse may have been permitted to associate him with his real parents. Some means were evidently found to instruct him in the history and Messianic hopes of Israel, for he knew that their reproach was that of "the Christ," greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, and fraught with a reward for which he looked in faith (Heb. xi. 26). But what is meant by naming as part of his burden their "reproach," as distinguished from their sufferings? We shall understand, if we reflect, that his open rupture with Egypt was unlikely to be the work of a moment. Like all the best workers, he was led forward gradually, at first unconscious of his vocation. Many

a protest he must have made against the cruel and unjust policy that steeped the land in innocent blood. Many a jealous councillor must have known how to weaken his dangerous influence by some cautious taunt, some insinuated "reproach" of his own Hebrew origin. The warnings put by Josephus into the lips of the priests in his childhood were likely enough to have been spoken by some one before he was forty years old. At last, when driven to make his choice, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," a phrase, especially in its reference to the rejected title as distinguished from "the pleasures of sin," which seems to imply a more formal rupture than Exodus records.

There was true heroism in the act, when Moses stepped down from Pharaoh's throne to share the lot of his brethren. He might have contented himself with sending them money from the treasures of Egypt; but it was a greater and nobler thing to give himself. And the true religious instinct of his soul gleamed out as he did so. There was a revelation of the faith which had been kindled within him when he knelt at his mother's side in the slave-hut, and had survived all the adverse influences of the Egyptian court, like a spark of fire living in the heart of black coals.

¶ The light that flashed from Moses' eyes was of more than mortal brilliancy, it was the sacred fire of enthusiasm, the glory that might illumine his face alone who knew himself to be in direct communication with the Deity. And well and wisely has that kindred soul, Italy's greatest sculptor, portrayed him thus, with the aureole of genius and titanic strength encircling his brow. Across the centuries these two, mystically allied by their superhuman energies and achievements, have met and understood one another, and the real Moses stands forever revealed to us in the form and features lent him here. It is strength in its highest manifestation which Michelangelo has symbolized, and we feel ourselves in presence of something that transcends our puny human faculties, that springs from Faith, unswerving and unshaken.[1]

2. Pondering the great question of his life which was pressing for decision, he went out to see how it fared with his kindred. He soon became witness of an act of oppression and cruelty.

[1] *From Memory's Shrine: Reminiscences of Carmen Sylva*, 74.

"He saw an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren." He had the fiery vindictive blood of Levi in his veins, and he smote the oppressor. Having satisfied his conscience by this act of vengeance on the wrong-doer, he returned to his place in the court, fondly believing that the deed he had done was hid, and that it was still open to him to decide whether he would finally espouse the Hebrew cause. There was much to be said against his doing so, from the apparent hopelessness of making anything of so depraved a race. His next experience among them seemed to illustrate that hopelessness. He found a Hebrew doing as foul a wrong to one of his own people as he had seen done by the Egyptian. When he interfered on behalf of the wronged he was assailed with scornful words. The deed, in doing which he had risked so much, was cast in his teeth, and he had the sickening experience which is almost sure to come to everyone who seeks to elevate the degraded—of the hopelessness of the task to which he has set himself, and of the ingratitude with which it is likely to be repaid. He might possibly have turned aside from that to which the better instincts of his heart inclined him, and sunk back into a contented worldling; but God had shut him in. The intimation, which the sneer of the Israelite conveyed, that the slaying of the Egyptian was known, was immediately followed by signs of Pharaoh's wrath; and so now the die was cast, and by faith he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

¶ The most remarkable instance of second sight in the Bible is given by Moses' choice where he "had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Three times we are told he took a look past the material and the visible over the shoulder of things to the real values, imperishable, eternal, to the face of God. Doubtless there were many to call him short-sighted; and so it would seem at first sight, but second sight showed better powers of vision. The invisible came into ken, and a reward incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, was his.[1]

¶ To bring thought and action into harmony, to make the presence of the Unseen a guide through the path of this present world: that is the problem of the practically religious life. To Florence Nightingale, communion with the Unseen meant some-

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 14.

thing deeper, richer, fuller, more positive than the fear of God. The fear of God is the beginning, but not the end, of wisdom, for perfect love casteth out fear. It was for the love of God as an active principle in her mind, constraining all her deeds, that she strove.[1]

(1) In seeking to understand this attempt of Moses to relieve the hard lot of his brethren we notice, first, that *it sprang largely from sympathy.*—At first it must have seemed very strange to him to realize that he was bound in bonds of such close kinship to these toiling, suffering, dying Hebrews. "He went out unto his brethren." But this feeling must soon have given place to an intense commiseration, as he heard the nation sighing by reason of its bondage; and, groaning under its accumulated sorrows, his soul would be filled with tender pity. And within a little, that pity for his people turned to indignation against their oppressors. But the mere impulse of pity would never have been strong enough to bear him through the weary years of the desert march. Beneath the repeated provocations of the people it must have given way. He could never have carried them as a nursing-father, or asked that he might be blotted out of the book of life for them, or pleaded with them for God. Nothing short of a reception of the Divine patience, let into his soul as the ocean waves find an inlet into some deeply-indented coast, could suffice for the demands which would be made on him in those coming terrible years.

(2) *It was premature.*—God's time for the deliverance of His people was not due for forty years. The iniquity of the Amorites had not reached its full, though it was nearing the brim of the cup. His own education, moreover, was very incomplete; it would take at least forty years to drain him of his self-will and self-reliance, and make him a vessel meet for the Master's use. The Hebrew people had not as yet come to the pitch of anguish, which is so touchingly referred to, when the death of their principal oppressor seems to have brought matters to a crisis, and they forsook the false gods to which they had given their allegiance in order to return to the God of their fathers.

(3) It was done *in the pride of his own strength.*—It was but natural that Moses should suppose that he could do some-

[1] Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 50.

thing for the amelioration of his people's lot. He had always been accustomed to have his way. Crowds of obsequious servants and courtiers had yielded to his slightest whim. By his strong right hand he had hewn out a great career. He was conscious of vast stores of youthful energy and natural force, untapped by sufficient calls, and undiminished by physical excess; surely these would count for something. He would make that nation of oppressors reel before his blows, and of course he would be hailed by his brethren as their God-sent deliverer. We have been disposed to attribute too much of the success of the Exodus to the natural qualities of the great leader; but we must always remember that, like Gideon's host, he was at first too strong for God. God cannot give His glory to another. He dare not entrust His power to men till they are humbled and emptied and conscious of their helplessness. Even the Son learned obedience by the things that He suffered, before He could say, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

¶ Let us view Moses' sacrifice in the light of that of the great Master Himself. Between Jesus coming to earth to redeem men and Moses leaving the court of Egypt out of sympathy for his oppressed nation there was no doubt an infinite difference in one view, but a near resemblance in another. Like Jesus, he could not rest satisfied with an honourable and comfortable position, while his brethren appealed so powerfully to his compassion. Like Jesus, he threw in his lot with his afflicted people, and became for them a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was of that noble type of men who are ever ready to sacrifice themselves for others, and count no labour and no pain too great on their behalf. In the Divine Son of Mary this type is at its highest. But in all ages, and notably in our own, we find not a few who have devoted themselves heart and soul to the cause of the oppressed, and found their noblest satisfaction in relieving their burdens and breaking their fetters. Nothing can ever rob Christianity of this glorious distinction so long as the example of Him retains its power, who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."[1]

3. When the news of Moses' first attempt came to the ears of Pharaoh, he sought to slay Moses. Moses feared, and fled from the face of Pharaoh. In after years, under similar circumstances,

[1] W. G. Blaikie, *Heroes of Israel*, 307.

it is said that "he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king" (Heb. xi. 27). And when we ask the reason of his fearlessness, we learn that it was by faith he did so; for "he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." But if such were the case afterwards, why was it not so at the time with which we are dealing? The reason is obvious. Faith is possible only when we are on God's plan, and stand on God's promise. It is useless to pray for increased faith until we have fulfilled the conditions of faith. And amongst those conditions this is the first—ascertain your place in God's plan, and get on to it; and this is the second—feed on God's promises. And when each of these is realized, faith comes of itself, and there is absolutely nothing that is impossible. The believing soul can "do all things" with God, because it has got on to God's lines; it is, indeed, itself as the metal track along which God travels to men in love, grace, and truth. But Moses was out of touch with God. So he fled and crossed the desert that lay between him and the eastern frontier; threaded the mountain passes of the Sinaitic Peninsula, through which in after years he was to lead his people; and at last sat wearily down by a well in the land of Midian.

¶ A fugitive from Egyptian justice, starting from Memphis, would almost necessarily set his face towards the east. He could not escape by travelling northward, for in that direction the dominion of the Egyptian monarch reached to the shores of the sea; it was hopeless to proceed southward, for the frontier on that side was 700 miles away; to the west was nothing but uninhabited sandy desert, without food, or water, or shade. The eastern desert was, on the contrary, to some extent peopled; it had trees and wells in places, and thus was traversable; though reckoned to Egypt, it was scarcely under the Egyptian rule, and the writ of Pharaoh scarcely ran in its recesses. Moses, having provided himself with a bag of meal and a water-bottle, would enter on the desert within a few hours of quitting Memphis, and would gradually thread its valleys, always making towards the east, until he passed the head of the Gulf of Suez, and found himself in Arabia. Even there, however, he was not wholly safe. The Egyptians in the time of Rameses II. had permanent settlements in the Wady Magharah and at Sarabit-el-Khadim in the Sinaitic Peninsula, where they worked the mines of copper and turquoise which then abounded in those districts. To communicate with these settlements they must have had a line of fortified posts, extending

from their frontier at or near Suez to the valleys in which the mines were situated. It was the aim of Moses to place himself beyond the sphere of Egyptian influence altogether; and to do this he had to reach the more eastern portion of the peninsula, a region at that time inhabited by the Midianites, and known as "the land of Midian" (Exod. ii. 15). The route which he took was probably very much the same as that by which he afterwards led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. It ran nearly parallel with the eastern coast of the Gulf of Suez, but did not skirt the shore excepting for a short distance. It avoided the Egyptian posts and settlements, and brought the traveller, after the lapse of some weeks, to the vicinity of the Elanitic Gulf, or eastern arm of the Red Sea, which seems in early times to have been the proper country of the southern Midianites.[1]

[1] G. Rawlinson, *Moses: His Life and Times*, 59.

MOSES.

III.

In Midian.

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In Midian.

Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian.—Exod. iii. 1.

When we come to consider the sojourn of Moses in Midian the impression we receive is one of disappointment. The youth has become a middle-aged man; the courtier of Egypt has become a shepherd in Midian. The ardour of his choice has not been supplemented by ardour of deed. Its only result has been asceticism. He has fled from the scene where his people were oppressed, but he has done nothing to relieve the oppression. He has seemingly been wasting his time.

But it is not so. He has been preparing for the call of God and the work which God has prepared for him to do.

¶ I am struck by the fact that between the age of moral choice and the period of outward action the Bible loves to interpose a time of rest. The child-Jesus sees His mission at the age of twelve, but enters upon it only at the age of thirty. The man of Tarsus beholds a light from heaven and is eager at once to follow it; but he is sent for three years to ponder in the solitudes of Arabia. There is a time in moral history when a voice says to every one, "Come up into this desert place, and rest a while!" It would seem as if the morning were not the test of a man, as if the hour of excitement were not the hour of surest promise. The Divine Voice says: "Go, and think over it. Do not yield at once to the impulse of the morning. Try how long it will survive. Test it by the circling of the hours. See if it will outlast the season of excitement. You can march to battle at the sound of trumpet and the beat of drum; can you be resolute for the struggle when there are no accompaniments of glory? Only *then* can you say that you have received your call."[1]

[1] G. Matheson, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, i. 208.

I.

The Desert.

I have been a stranger in a strange land.—Exod. ii. 22.

For more than a generation Moses has disappeared into the desert, and, whilst he enlarged his religious ideas by contact with the priest of Midian himself, the change produced in the temperament of the future deliverer was mainly owing to the chastening severities and the appalling solitudes of his new environment. He needed these hard and inhospitable tracts of Midian, not only as a sanctuary from the wrath of Pharaoh, but also as a school to prepare him for his coming work as emancipator and nation-builder.

Strange change this from the painted halls of Egypt, perfumed with spices and cooled with plashing fountains, to the coarse black tent of the shepherd that scarcely keeps out the heats of noon or the winds of night! To pass, within a few short weeks, from the emerald fields and shaded orchards and sumptuous banquets of the Nile to the precarious wells, the sand storms, the scrub-patches, and the dates and coarse bread of the desert was a transformation few would welcome. The man who had known from childhood the touch of fine linen upon his limbs must now wear the coarse hair-cloth of the mountain herdsman. A few months ago he might have allied himself by marriage with the royal or priestly families of Egypt, but now he is glad to take for his bride a sun-burnt maiden from the sheep-folds, whose talk ranges chiefly over the commonplace topics of wool, dairy work, querns, and primitive ovens for bread-baking. To a man trained in the best arts of the day, and moved by large ambitions in religious statecraft, such a life must have been insufferably narrow and irksome; but at length he resigns himself to its duties and finds therein quiet contentment of spirit. He once expected to be the founder and first prophet of a religious commonwealth, but his old ideals have vanished. Little by little he breaks himself into his new life. As he wanders through the round of successive seasons over the blistering sands and up the grim wadies, whose silence is unbroken for weeks, save by the bleating of the flocks and the

screaming of vultures, the passion, self-will and presumptuous recklessness of the first phase of character in which he has been presented to us die down to the roots, and this change in the man has changed the history of the world.

¶ Some years ago I was struck with the vivid yet delicate sensitiveness to the life and power of nature shown in the following story which is told by Mr. Owen Rhoscomyl in the Christmas number of the *Idler*. The scene is laid in the Western Prairies of America:—"Two days ago he was riding back, alone, in the afternoon, from an unsuccessful search after strayed horses, and suddenly, all in the lifting of a hoof, the weird prairie had gleamed into eerie life, had dropped the veil and spoken to him; while the breeze stopped, and the sun stood still for a flash in waiting for his answer. And he, his heart in a grip of ice, the frozen flesh a-crawl with terror upon his loosened bones, white-lipped and wide-eyed with frantic fear, uttered a yell of horror as he dashed the spurs into his panic-stricken horse, in a mad endeavour to escape from the Awful Presence that filled all earth and sky from edge to edge of vision. Then, almost in the same flash, the unearthly light died out of the dim prairie, the veil swept across into place again; and he managed to check his wild flight and look about him. . . . It was as if his spirit stood apart from him, putting questions which he could not answer, and demanding judgment upon problems which he dare not reason out. Then he remembered what this thing was which had happened. The prairie had spoken to him, as sooner or later it spoke to most men that rode it. It was a something well known amongst them, but known without words, and as by a subtle instinct, for no man who had experienced it ever spoke willingly about it afterwards. Only the man would be changed; some began to be more reckless, as if a dumb blasphemy rankled hidden in their breasts. Others, coming with greater strength perhaps to the ordeal, became quieter, looking squarely at any danger as they faced it, but continuing ahead as though quietly confident that nothing happened save as the gods ordained."[1]

O all wide places, far from feverous towns;
Great shining seas; pine forests; mountains wild;
Rock-bosomed shores; rough heaths, and sheep-cropt downs;
Vast pallid clouds; blue spaces undefiled—
Room! give me room! give loneliness and air—
Free things and plenteous in your regions fair!

[1] W. M. Ramsay, *The Education of Christ*, 7.

O God of mountains, stars, and boundless spaces,
  O God of freedom and of joyous hearts,
When Thy face looketh forth from all men's faces,
  There will be room enough in crowded marts!
Brood Thou around me, and the noise is o'er,
Thy universe my closet with shut door.

Heart, heart, awake! The love that loveth all
  Maketh a deeper calm than Horeb's cave.
God in thee, can His children's folly gall?
  Love may be hurt, but shall not love be brave?—
Thy holy silence sinks in dews of balm;
Thou art my solitude, my mountain-calm![1]

1. What a contrast there is between the man who goes into the desert and the man who comes out of it. We saw him step forth from the palace, the judge and the ruler—the man born to command; and if he is not obeyed there is a sharp and ready method of dealing with the offender. Smite him, kill him if need be. A young hero this who will not stand any nonsense; and when his heart is on fire take care of yourself—he can shoot lightnings, forked and well-aimed. But his heart is saddened; this fighting and smiting does not succeed. Then come the days of loneliness and disappointment softening him. This man must fail that he may succeed. Failure alone can fit such men for success. The life of the shepherd is gradually toning down the lordly ruler and making him more simple and brotherly. This communion with God in the solitudes has loosened him from himself. The very calling of the shepherd day after day has developed gentleness and kindly forethought and patience. He learns to walk slowly that the tired sheep may keep up with him. He stoops, he who was the fierce warrior, to lift the little lamb and carry it in his bosom. Day after day he thinks only of the panting flock, searching out the shade for them, and leading them where they can lie down in the green pasture. So does this Moses come to be diffident, pitiful as a father, forbearing. And when God comes to him with the great commission, he has room for God, much room; he who was "mighty in deeds and in words" is afraid of himself. He is "not eloquent,"—who will heed him?

[1] George MacDonald, *Organ Songs* (*Poetical Works*, i. 288).

Pharaoh will not hear him or Israel receive him. So Moses becomes the meekest of men. How? He has been to school. Where? In the wilderness. For what? That he may learn to lead the flock of God like a shepherd; that he may bear with them, and pity them, and be not only brave, but patient and gentle. So was he fitted for the great work that God had for him to do.

2. It was not only essential that the leader of the Exodus and the lawgiver of Israel should be intellectually able, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, mighty in words and deeds; not only morally noble, one who could choose "rather to be evil entreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." It was essential that he should have the deep spiritual experience and the solitary fellowship of soul with the Highest which constitute those who have them in some sense poets. The promulgator of the new religion, which in the end was to develop into a universal faith, must learn to see every bush in the wilderness ablaze with the Divine glory, burning but not consumed; and to hear God's eternal law proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet by every thunderstorm which rolls its echoes among the mountains.

¶ In the training of every man who would attain to the highest type of human life, and to the greatest possible power to influence other lives for good, there is something more needed than the culture of the intellectual, something more even than the development of the moral, nature, before it reaches the power to render any sacrifice required by God and duty. If we would attain the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ all this must be crowned by the spiritual. We must learn to see the vision and to dream the dream. We must rise into fellowship with the unseen, and behold the world transfigured in the light that never was on sea or land. Our eyes must be open to the glory of the Lord, which shines refulgent on every bush, and our ears must be quick to hear His voice, which whispers in every passing breeze and waxes louder and louder in every storm. We must attain that reverence without which the highest gifts are vain, and be willing to bow as children before the unfathomable mystery of God, taking our shoes from off our feet because we stand on holy ground. All this can be reached only through habitual retirement from the babble of the world, through patient

waiting for God's promised revelation to faithful hearts and God's appointed time for opening to us the path of duty.[1]

II.

The Bush.

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.—Exod. iii. 2, 3.

The Burning Bush is one of the most striking incidents in the story of the Bible. It held, as we know, a prominent place in the thought and study of the Hebrew people. The passage in which the episode is recorded was commonly cited as "the Bush." It occupies a leading position in the development of the interrupted speech which forms the defence of Stephen before the Sanhedrin. And the celebrated argument by which our Lord unexpectedly silenced the Sadducees in the controversy concerning resurrection was drawn from this experience of Moses, the great lawgiver. Had they never read "in the Bush" how Moses speaks of the God of his fathers? Abraham was indeed departed, but dead he could not be, for God "is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Nor is it wonderful that the incident should have impressed the imagination of succeeding ages. It is the critical, personal experience in the life of a great leader, which, as happens again and again with the world's men of action, was to find its interpretation in the sphere of public history. The refined and cultured personality within which smouldered the fire of a generous enthusiasm; the rolling uplands of the lonely Sinaitic desert for which he had exchanged the pavements and palaces of the crowded city; the black mountains of Horeb against which the clump of wind-swept acacia glowed with steady flame; the revelation of the nature and name of the Eternal which became the impulse at the back of those wonders in Egypt that brought the house of Jacob from among a strange people—these have all combined to make the burning bush one of the most inspiring

[1] James Brown, *Sermons with Memoir*, 172.

symbols with which the history of religion has enriched the race.

¶ A little stunted bush, low-placed and desert-bound, a trivial thing giving no rest from glare, no shade from sun, a thing outside the common use of life, child of a day, creature of circumstance: raising no thought above the commonplace, devoid of mission, message, comfort, anything that makes life happier to men around.

Then a breath of inspiration, flash of light, a wave of holy influence, touch of miracle: God daring the unusual. Everything defined, enthused under the wonder-change, the desert-prophet drawn to see the sight, the stunted Bush the centre of attraction.

A message echoing down the centuries, words of encouragement and comfort, hope for the hopeless, freedom for the slave, Moses for leader: he who yesterday was desert-ranger now the Friend of God, recipient of His Law, Vision and Glory.

Desert transfigured, commonplace relieved, the Bush no longer common but glorified, inspired, type of the Incarnation—God in the passing phase, the casual thoughts of men: God in the desert drear, the common things of life: God in human life. God of the burning hearts and cleansed lips, God of the busy hands and thoughtful brow, God of the Altar-fire. God of our highest hopes, our motives pure: God of our strongest and our weakest hours: God of our manhood's will, our woman's love, our children's innocence and merry play. God of the hills and valleys, stormy sea and desert wild: God of surprises, God revealed in fire.[1]

1. *The bush.*—The burning bush has traditionally been supposed to be a kind of bramble (*Rubus*), of which Palestine has several varieties; but one of the thorny shrubs of Sinai of the acacia family would seem more probable. Sacred bushes and trees are common in Palestine and Arabia.

¶ Transfiguration is for Thompson the most familiar of mysteries. Good faith needs no Burning Bush. Or, rather, for the faithful every bush is alight. For this faithful poet the seasons were full of the promise of Resurrection. In spring he calls

> Hark to the *Jubilate* of the bird
> For them that found the dying way to life!

[1] A. Daintree, *Studies in Hope*, 21.

The rebirth of the earth after winter is the figure of the future life:

> Thou wak'st, O Earth,
> And work'st from change to change and birth to birth
> Creation old as hope, and new as sight.

And—

> All the springs are flash-lights of one Spring.

In the same poem he is seen at his daily business, the routine work of co-ordinating and synthesizing. Light—the light of the sun—is also

> Light to the sentient closeness of the breast,
> Light to the secret chambers of the brain!

Arguments that go from heaven downwards are the commonplaces of his poetry.[1]

2. *The bush burned with fire.*—Throughout Scripture, fire is a symbol of the Divine nature, as in the smoking lamp and the blazing fire that Abraham saw, or the pillar that lighted the darkness over the sleeping camp, or as in the prophet's word, "The light of Israel shall be a flaming fire," or as in the Baptist's prophecy of a baptism in the Holy Ghost and in fire, or as at Pentecost with its fiery tongues, or as in the great saying, "Our God is a consuming fire."

¶ In almost every religion on earth a sacred significance attached to fire. That significance is not primarily destruction, as we sometimes suppose—an error which has led to ghastly misunderstandings of some Scriptures, and of the God whom they reveal. When, for instance, Isaiah asks, "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" he has been supposed to be asking what soul can endure the terrors of God's consuming and unending wrath. But a little attention to the words would have shown that the "devouring fire" and the "everlasting burnings" mean God and not hell, and that the Divine nature is by them represented not as too fierce to be approached but as the true dwelling place of men, which indeed only the holy can inhabit, but to inhabit which is life. Precisely parallel is the Psalmist's question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?" Fire is the source of warmth, and so, in a sense, of life. It is full of quick energy; it transmutes dead matter into its own ruddy likeness, and changes gross

[1] E. Meynell, *The Life of Francis Thompson* (1913), 203.

earthly dulness into flame aspiring towards the skies. Therefore it is fit symbol of creative and cleansing power. God is the fiery Spirit of the universe, a spark from whom irradiates and vitalizes every living thing. But the felicity of the symbol is that, along with blessed thoughts of life-giving and purifying, it suggests potentiality of destructive energy. The same God is the fire to quicken, sanctify and bless, and, if rejected, to consume. "What maketh heaven, that maketh hell."[1]

¶ "I think," said Dinah Morris, "when God makes His presence felt through us, we are like the burning bush: Moses never took any heed what sort of bush it was—he only saw the brightness of the Lord."[2]

3. The bush burned with fire, and *the bush was not consumed.*—That undying flame teaches the same great truth as the accompanying words, "I am that I am." It burns and does not burn out, it has no exhaustion waiting on its energy, and thus is a symbol of the One Being whose being is its own law and its own source. He gives and is none the poorer; He works and never wearies; He "operates unspent"; He loves and loves for ever. We are that which we become; He is that which He is. We die because we live, but He lives by His own life. That fire burns, and needs no replenishing, and knows no extinction. Surely that great sight, which startled and strengthened the shepherd for his tremendous task, may well evoke our faith. Surely, in our fleeting days, the one means of securing for ourselves blessedness, rest, strength, and a life that, like His, can never die into cold ashes, is to grasp this great truth, and to knit ourselves to Him who lives for ever, and whose love is as lasting as His life, "The everlasting God, the Lord, fainteth not, neither is weary. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."

¶ Oh! if one had to depend upon the state of one's feelings, changes of one's temperament! If God left us to these? But He *is*, and therefore may we trust at all times, and in all places, and in all moods of minds. It does not signify much whether the body is weak or the mind weak; God can take care of both. Christ poured forth His soul to death, as well as gave up His body, and trusted under the sense of being lost. It is that trust

[1] A. Maclaren, *Leaves from the Tree of Life*, 85.
[2] George Eliot, *Adam Bede.*

which stands us in stead, trust when there is nothing in past, present, or future, in anything one can see, hear, remember in others or oneself to lean upon. Then we know God. The bush is burning and not consumed. He is in it.[1]

4. The burning bush is *an emblem of indestructibility.*

(1) To the children of Israel it has always been an emblem of the indestructibility of the "People of God." "God shewed unto Moses"—such was an ancient interpretation—"a fire that burned and caused no destruction, and said, Behold, as the bush is burned with fire and is not consumed, so Israel cannot be destroyed by his enemies." "Time," so says a modern Jewish rabbi, "the great destroyer of all earthly things, has passed over Israel and his religion, and has not affected them. That people is not numerous, it is weak; rather than the cedar of Lebanon, it resembles the frail bush of the mountain which nothing can defend from the storm. Yet Israel exists. But there is Fire in the bush: a devouring flame envelops it. The earth has often been reddened with the blood of thousands of victims; it has been a battle-field on which the fire consumed everything it met. The kings of the world conspired against that people; they invented calumny, employed persecution, and attempted to efface it from the number of the living; and yet Israel exists: the bush was not consumed."

(2) What Israel has said, so also may the Church of Christ say regarding her sufferings, her inheritance, and her destiny. She also has appeared to be enveloped in flame, to be involved in inevitable destruction; but she has been preserved through all, and in the midst of seeming ruin, the voice of God is heard, and the presence of God is discerned.

¶ It was apparently in the year 1583 that the Synod of the Reformed Church of France resolved that a seal should be made for its use, wherewith all letters of importance written in its name might be sealed; and nothing better fitted to symbolize the "renowned and once flourishing, though now desolate, Church could be devised than Moses' vision when he fed his flocks under the mount of God, viz. a Bramble Bush in a flaming fire, having that essential incommunicable name of God—Jehovah—engraved in its centre, and this motto, 'I burn, but am not consumed,' in its

[1] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, i. 515.

circumference." The adoption of the seal is said to have caused much commotion among the enemies of the Church, and all documents which could be found bearing the emblem were seized and destroyed. From France, the device passed to Scotland, appearing first on the title page of a book, then on Acts of Assembly; and now, not only the Scottish Church, but most of her offshoots, both in this land and in other lands, have assumed the Burning Bush as their emblem, and the words *Nec tamen consumebatur* ("it was not consumed") as their motto.[1]

(3) And so it is also with the life of the individual. For this is the very truth which Christ, with a depth of interpretation that put to shame the cavilling listeners, found in the words that accompanied this vision: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He said to the sneering Sadducees, who, like all other sneerers, saw only the surface of what they were sarcastic about, "Did not Moses teach you in" (the section about) "the Bush, that the dead rise, when he said: I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob?" A man of whom it can once be said that God is his God cannot die. Such a bond can never be broken. The communion of earth, imperfect as it is, is the prophecy of heaven and the pledge of immortality. And so from that relationship which subsisted between the fathers and God, Christ infers the certainty of their resurrection. It seems a great leap, but there are intervening steps, not stated by our Lord, which securely bridge the distance between the premisses and the conclusion. Such communion is, in its very nature, unaffected by the accident of death. Therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still living, "for all"—those whom we call dead, as well as those whom we call living—"live unto him," and though so many centuries have passed, God still is, not *was*, their God. The relation between them is eternal, and guarantees their immortal life. But immortality without corporeity is not conceivable as the perfect state, and if the dead live still, there must come a time when the whole man shall partake of redemption; and in body, soul, and spirit, the glorified and risen saints shall be for ever with the Lord.

[1] P. M'Adam Muir.

III.

The Call.

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.—Exod. iii. 4.

"The call of Moses," says Professor Westphal, "is the central event of Hebrew Jehovism, just as the vision of St. Paul on the road to Damascus is the central event of the Apostolic Church. There is no more reason to question the reality of the burning bush—*flagror non consumor*—than to throw doubt upon the great light which struck down the Apostle of the Gentiles. And, as the vision of Saul was accompanied by a revelation which the Apostle afterwards called his *gospel*, so Moses also received, in this spiritual meeting with God, the *gospel* which was to be the key-note of all the preaching of the prophets."

1. It is a call. It is a call from God. God is first. And He is first in this call because of His sympathy. Before the call of Moses we have the statement of God's sympathy with the children of Israel in the sufferings in Egypt. Four statements are made—God heard; God remembered; God saw; God knew.

(1) *God heard.*—"Their cry came up unto God." Probably it did not articulate itself in petition. It was just a cry of misery, in which the deeper voice of manhood blended with the anguish of the bereaved mother and the wail of the babe. But God understood it, and was able to trace each formative element to its source. In the graphic language of the chroniclers, it "came up unto God."

(2) *God remembered.*—"God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." We are carried back to that solemn watch of two nights and a day that Abraham kept, when, conforming to the wont of the sons of the desert, God gave visible confirmation of the validity of His covenant: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out

with great substance." That covenant was afterwards solemnly ratified with additions, and is described as an everlasting or eternal covenant. In some respects it still lies at the basis of all God's dealings with those who, by faith, are the children of faithful Abraham. Though four long centuries had passed, that covenant was as fresh as at its inauguration in the heart of Jehovah; and, not because of the worthiness of the people, but because of the two immutable things that made it impossible for Him to lie, when the time of the promise drew nigh, He began to carry its provisions into execution.

(3) *God saw.*—"And God saw the children of Israel." "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt." To realize that He sees and knows, that nothing which concerns us is hidden from Him, that the darkness shines as the day, and the lowest part of the earth conceals nothing from His omniscience—this carries with it all the rest; for He cannot see without coming down in pitying help. When in after days the children of Israel were assured that Jehovah had seen their affliction, "then they bowed their heads and worshipped," as though they had nothing more to ask; and the result justified their act.

(4) *God knew.*—"And God took knowledge of them." He notes all things in His book, puts every tear into His bottle, counts the hairs as they fall from the head or turn white with anguish. "I have surely seen the affliction of my people. . . . I know their sorrows." God knows with a *personal* knowledge. It has been truly said that the word "masses" does not occur in God's vocabulary. We are not masses, but units; not a forest, but trees; not a race, but individuals. It is as though there were but one child in the Father's house, and each of us that child. He also knows with a *sympathetic* knowledge. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and whatever is done to us is accepted as done to Him. "I was in prison, and ye visited me not." "He that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me." Just as the head suffers with each throb of pain in any of its members, so does Christ suffer through the centuries each slight or wrong meted out to one of His own. God knows with a *knowledge bathed in love.*[1]

[1] F. B. Meyer.

¶ In the groaning and travailing of creation she bore her part, but never alone; always God was there bearing His part and the part of every one. Across the whole world there lay for her the light of the glory of Divine sacrifice. Not for her was any picture of a serene and far-away God without "parts or passions," looking on at the world's pain; it was the glory of her God to share all pain. There was nothing, no weariness of hers or any man's, no suffering, even of the beasts, that was not His. And faith in God gave her also faith in suffering, in the value of a sacrifice to be accomplished, of a travail that should bring forth fruit to all eternity, of groaning that was the utterance of slaves working towards their manumission and the freedom of Divine sons. "Lo, how I loved thee!" All men shall hear this when their own sacrifice is indeed accomplished, and their "sin-glazed eyes" open to see who it is that has sacrificed Himself in them. This was her strength.[1]

¶ "I know their sorrows." The saintly and scholarly M'Cheyne described this as "a sweet word." Such it assuredly is. Of all the sweet words of the Bible surely none is sweeter than this. As the captive Israelites sweated and groaned under their relentless taskmasters, the sympathizing Jehovah said, "I know their sorrows." And as He beholds us in all the tragedy of our inner life and of our outer life, He still exclaims, "I know their sorrows."[2]

2. And now the time is come for the deliverance of Israel, and the first step is to call the leader. "God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses."

God cannot do without Moses. We are ready enough to assert that Moses can do nothing without God. He has, perhaps, tried and failed; and we had better hold by that principle. But we must be equally ready to assert that God will do nothing without Moses. He is the man, and no other will do. In mind and heart, by the education of the palace and the desert, he has been trained and fitted for this stupendous business, and no one else can do it. Most impressive is the dialogue in this chapter between a commanding and persuading God and a shrinking, fearful man. The Most High, who can lay Pharaoh's pride in the dust with a touch of His hand, waits and pleads and reasons with, assures and reassures, and almost drives this reluctant shepherd; and apparently will not move for the relief of Israel

[1] *Michael Fairless: Her Life and Writings*, 67.
[2] Dinsdale T. Young, *The Unveiled Evangel*, 205.

without him. It illustrates a universal principle. The lesson of history, the greatest lesson of the Incarnation, is that it is by humanity that humanity will be redeemed.

¶ Thomas Carlyle complains concerning human sorrow that "God does nothing." Perhaps He is waiting for Thomas Carlyle, who does nothing. For nothing is more certain than the fact that every movement for the emancipation and uplifting of the human race has had a man at the heart of it, and that God does nothing without the co-operation of man. John Wesley's saying has been often quoted, that "God buries His workmen but carries on His work." It is true; only let it be realized that He carries it on by the hands of other workmen.[1]

3. Why Moses? There must have been some preparation in this man's life before this vision came. We cannot suppose that it would so suddenly have enabled him to believe in a calling so overwhelming in its difficulties, if God had not by the discipline of his former life awakened thoughts and feelings in his soul which this vision kindled into power. God never reveals to the thoughtless a great work like that. The prophets and messengers of the old time were constantly prepared by long hours of thought and doubt over the evils of the world, before they were summoned to action. The Lord Himself went for forty days of lonely conflict into the wilderness; Paul was sent for three years into the wild regions of Arabia; and Moses was trained by more than forty years of thought and sorrow, before God showed him his destiny. And so we may believe that all these years of Moses' life were a needful and gradual education for the wonderful hour when the bush burned with the presence of Jehovah and the work of his life became clear.

¶ "Thy lot or portion in life," said the Caliph Ali, "is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking after it." So Miss Nightingale may have read in Emerson; and in homelier phrase her good Aunt Mai had said to her, "If you will but be ready for *it*, something is getting ready for you, and will be sure to turn up in time." Which things Florence, I doubt not, laid up in her heart. When news began to arrive from the East, did she recall a prophecy which had been made about her by a friend long before the Crimean War was dreamt of? Lady Lovelace, the daughter of Lord Byron, the "Ada, sole daughter of my home and heart,"

[1] Charles Brown, *The Birth of a Nation*, 120.

had, before her death in 1852, written a poem in honour of her friend, Florence Nightingale. The piece ends with a presage:—

> In future years, in distant climes,
> Should war's dread strife its victims claim,
> Should pestilence, unchecked betimes,
> Strike more than sword, than cannon maim,
> He who then reads these truthful rhymes
> Will trace her progress to undying fame.[1]

(1) Perhaps we may see signs of Moses' fitness in the exercise of *curiosity*: "And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." It is an outward sign, something appealing to curiosity and wonder, that first seizes the attention of a man, whether he be a shepherd on a lonely plain or a dweller in a city, and that compels him to ask himself, "What is this? whence comes it?" He may turn aside to see the great sight merely as a sight. The impression it makes may be upon his senses, or, through his senses, upon his imagination. But if his mind has been much exercised with inward conflicts before,—if he has been seeking for something not to gratify his eyes, but to be a rest and home for his own being; if his thoughts concerning himself have been connected with thoughts of other men; if he has been labouring under a weight which is resting upon himself and upon them—then the visible object will not be that which takes possession of him or holds him captive. It will be but the *sign* to him of something behind and beneath. He will ask for that which is signified by the burning bush. Its terror, and its wonder, will be not in itself but in that.

¶ We have all known men who have never in their lives been struck by a grand surprise; they are always so omniscient. If you tell them anything, they knew it before. If you could take them to the falls of Niagara, they would reply complacently and superciliously, "Ah, well, I thought they were better worth looking at than this." They have never been moved to wonder, much less to admiration, in their lives. Whenever you meet with such a man, who has no more capacity for emotion in him, in the direction of wonder and admiration, than cast-iron, you meet with a man who has done nothing worth doing in God's world. One of the first conditions of noble manhood is that a man should be capable of wonder, earnest inquiry and intense admiration when

[1] Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 141.

there is a worthy object for wonder, inquiry and admiration. And thus, "hero-worship" (a word capable of misuse and sometimes representing what is sinful by its extravagance) is a condition of greatness. Teach your boy to admire some character in history, teach your daughter to fall in love with some grand heroine, not in a novel but in the story of the ages. One of the steps towards becoming a hero is to admire a hero.[1]

(2) Another element in the fitness of Moses for his task was the capacity for *reverence*. There are many who have the spirit of inquiry without devotion. Moses said, "I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." Every man who has given his life to solve problems would have applauded this resolve on the part of Moses. But the next test of character is, "How is inquiry to be carried on?" Moses had probably now to learn this secret for the first time. Never had a mystery so startled him as at this moment. He would have plenty of mysteries by and by. The fire that set the acacia bush aflame would set the summit of Sinai ablaze very soon, and the man who was to be the leader of God's people must not stand in mere wonderment, but must know something about it. Thus God teaches him how to draw nigh to it.

¶ There is a sentence in Mrs. Sellar's *Recollections and Impressions* conveying an aspiration which I think may be placed side by side with the experience of the burning bush. It was a sentence written by Susan Ferrier in one of those birthday books in which friends were asked to record their wishes: "That life may never lose its halo." She desired that the mysterious, mystic light might always cling about everything, that everything might have a plus, that even the commonest thing might be the beginning of a lane leading to the infinite. It was a prayer that all her experiences might issue in wonder; that nothing might ever be completely analysable and measured and weighed, that always there should be a mystic something to make one hold the breath! It was a yearning that the bush might always be the home of a mysterious flame, and that the most lowly thing might be seen in relationship with the Eternal God.[2]

Tread softly! all the earth is holy ground.
It may be, could we look with seeing eyes,
This spot we stand on is a Paradise
Where dead have come to life and lost been found,

[1] D. Davies, *Talks with Men, Women and Children*, iv. 33. [2] J. H. Jowett.

Where Faith has triumphed, Martyrdom been crowned,
Where fools have foiled the wisdom of the wise;
From this same spot the dust of saints may rise,
And the King's prisoners come to light unbound.[1]

(3) But Moses was especially capable of *sympathy*. For Moses was not a shepherd. A fugitive in the wilderness, he had returned under stress of necessity to the ancestral occupations of his race. But he was "the son of Pharaoh's daughter," educated in a civilized court, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was a man of affairs and a philosopher, and more than this. If, like St. Paul in later times, he was "a citizen of no mean city," like him also he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." His contact with the court had not dulled his patriotism into cosmopolitan indifference. His heart was with his own folk, and their God was his God. His presence at the mount of God was due to the fact that he, the future lawgiver, had put himself outside the law in defence of his people.

¶ When David saw the coward hosts of Israel terrified by the boastful giant, and the sore need of a champion to fight the battles of the Lord, there came home to his heart and conscience this clear personal call, "This is thy business; thou must do it; thou must thyself be the champion." The same thing came to Carey, brooding over the midnight darkness of heathenism, and the miraculous apathy of the Church of God. He was driven to answer his own prayers, and to lay himself an offering on the altar of service. It is ever the way of God's working with men. The need which you see resolves itself into a call for personal service.[2]

4. In what form did the call come to Moses? God has a way of His own into the spirit which He has made. Standing over against all that is in the man, He lays His will upon him. The man wakens to realize that he stands summoned to specific submission and definite service by that Being in whom he lives and moves and has his being. Such a consciousness had Abraham, and Jeremiah, and Paul; and in the high places of the field, on Indian plains and Pacific isles, amid the most sunken of our cities, and among the throngs of men, are many who have been thrust out by the pressure of such a Divine call, and who are bearing

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 413.

[2] Charles Brown, *The Birth of a Nation*, 119.

the burden and heat of the day because of the overpowering conviction that they have been divinely chosen for, and are being divinely helped in, the work in which they are engaged.

¶ We know that God does not speak to us as though He had vocal organs, and in speech modelled after ours, obeying the rules of our grammar books. We know that God does not talk English to an Englishman, and French to a Frenchman. We know He does not converse with Germans in gutturals, and with Hottentots in clicks, though these elements are essential in the respective languages. Yet we are equally certain that He does speak to us; and history certifies that men in all ages have believed they heard the voice of God, and many a noble work has originated in such conviction. How does He speak, then? He speaks in terms of human consciousness, the laws of which are the same in all ages and in all races.[1]

¶ An old theologian says, "There are no Divine words except those that faith hears in the inmost sanctuary of the soul"; and the fact that the man who said that lived in an age that knew very little psychology makes the statement all the weightier. It is by the workings of a man's own mind that God speaks to him. It was so in the call of Moses: it is so in our own.[2]

¶ I never so saw God, never had Him come so broadly, clearly out. He has not spoken to me, but He has done what is more. There has been nothing debatable to speak for, but an infinite easiness and universal presentation to thought, as it were by revelation. Nothing ever seemed so wholly inviting and so profoundly supreme to the mind. Had there been a strain for it, then it could not be. O my God! what a fact to possess and know that He is! I have not seemed to compare Him with anything, and set Him in a higher value; but He has been the all, and the altogether, everywhere, lovely. There is nothing else to compete; there is nothing else, in fact. It has been as if all the revelations, through good men, nature, Christ, had been now through, and their cargo unloaded, the capital meaning produced and the God set forth in His own proper day,—the good, the true, the perfect, the all-holy and benignant. The question has not been whether I could somehow get nearer, but as if He had come out Himself just near enough, and left me nothing but to stand still and see the salvation; no excitement, no stress, but an amazing beatific tranquillity. I never thought I could possess God so completely.[3]

[1] G. K. Grice. [2] G. K. Grice.
[3] Horace Bushnell, in *Life*, by T. T. Munger, 338.

¶ The discovery of her true vocation belongs to a later period of our story; and it was not the result of childish fancy, or the accomplishment of early incident; it was the fruit of long and earnest study. What did come to Florence Nightingale early in life—perhaps, as one entry in her autobiographical notes suggests, as early as her sixth year—was the sense of a "call"; of some appointed mission in life; of self-dedication to the service of God. "I remember her," wrote Fanny Allen, in 1857, to her niece Elizabeth Wedgwood, "as a little girl of three or four, then the girl of sixteen of high promise. When I look back on every time I saw her after her sixteenth year, I see that she was ripening constantly for her work, and that her mind was dwelling on the painful differences of man and man in this life, and on the traps that a luxurious life laid for the affluent. A conversation on this subject between the father and daughter made me laugh at the time, the contrast was so striking; but now, as I remember it, it was the Divine Spirit breathing in her." In an autobiographical fragment written in 1867, Florence mentions as one of the crises of her inner life that "God called her to His service" on February 7, 1837, at Embley; and there are later notes which still fix that day as the dawn of her true life. But as yet she knew not whither the Spirit was to lead.[1]

5. How did the vision affect Moses in regard to the work of his life? The narrative implies two facts.

(1) The vision of God *prepared him* for the work of his life. We are told that, after forty years of waiting in the wilderness, the shepherd saw a bush burning and unconsumed, and turned aside to see that great sight. Something told him that the answer to the question of his life was at hand. A voice broke the stillness, and, while listening to its awful utterance, the wonder of the unconsuming fire would be forgotten in reverence before a grandeur the eye could not see. The voice said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." An awful thought for the lonely shepherd! For these words, above all others, would make him feel the sublime eternity of God. The thought of One who had remained unchanged amid the changes of the human world—unchanged, while the generations of men passed like a morning dream away—unchanged amid the shifting and decay of races, and who would still be when Moses had passed and his work was done! Thus, he must have felt the

[1] Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 15.

everlastingness of God. Then came the sense of unworthiness. What was *he*—a poor vanishing creature, whose years were but as a hurried dream between life and death—to do His work? What had been *his* small effort to free the people, while He lived on, who had sworn that freedom to Abraham, in the old days before him? Then the last shadow of self-trust vanished from his soul, "and Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." But then came the other voice that upheld him amid the overwhelming sense of his nothingness, and made him feel his vocation: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." Not unheard had been the wail of the oppressed—not unseen had been the cruelty of the king. The Everlasting Sympathy was with them, and that thought, upholding his sinking weakness, became a clear, strong call to action, and summoned him with the voice of the Eternal to his calling: "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

(2) The vision of God *gave endurance in fulfilling* that work. Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Let us see how that endurance came. At first, Moses was unwilling to go to Pharaoh. He had learned enough, during those strange years, to feel the difficulty of that task. Who was he that he should face the king and his armies? Then came that grand revelation of the name of God, which was to abide with him until his work was done—"I am that I am." There is an awful power in these words to bring us face to face with God, conveying as they do the Reality of all realities, the Mystery of mysteries. And observe, this revelation of the name of God made him feel the glory of the vision as an *ever-present* power. The bush might burn no more; but the unchanging Presence would still be with him. Under that consciousness, the sense of his insignificance faded. His terror of Pharaoh passed away. What were human obstacles to him before whose eye were ever present the glories he had seen in the desert, and to whom had come that revelation of the Lord? Should the people sneer at, and reject him; should he have to stand alone; should he seem to fail; and should he die with his work undone

—still, that mighty vision had given him a grasp on eternity which would keep him strong and true!

¶ I quite agree with you that such things as these—God's goodness and grace in the hearts He has made—are the true stars we have to look to in our night, and if some of them have set sooner, they did shine for us, and are shining still. Our small horizon is not His universe. I think this is a conviction that grows on us the more we dwell on it, and how thankful we should be when God has given us in our history realities of life to help us to rise to the realities of faith. It is a way in which sight helps faith; for surely something akin to this lies in the words of Christ, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"—not merely that Christ is the image of God, but that a Divine life witnessed by us on earth is the evidence of a God. So that one may say, we can be as sure of God as if we had seen Him, and if we are sure of Him we are sure of everything.[1]

What bard,
At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt,
When he lay in the night by his flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?
Can rise and obey
The beck of the Spirit like him?[2]

[1] *Letters of John Ker*, 84.

[2] Matthew Arnold, *The Future*.

MOSES.

IV.

The God of Israel and His Messenger.

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The God of Israel and His Messenger.

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.—Exod. iii. 14.

Out of the bush came the voice of God, blending past, present, and future in one marvellous sentence: *the past*, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"; *the present*, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them"; *the future*, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh."

Here are also these three: the *people* who have to be delivered, the *God* who is to deliver them, and the *instrument* of their deliverance. We have been with the people already. We have also seen how Moses has been prepared for his task. Let us now look at the way in which he receives his commission, and then let us try to understand something of the God who sends him.

I.

The Commission.

I am come down to deliver them.—Exod. iii. 8.
Come now therefore, and I will send thee.—Exod. iii. 10.

Is there a discrepancy between these two announcements? If God has Himself come down to do the work of redemption, what need of Moses? Would not a word from God's Almighty lips be enough? Why summon a shepherd, a lonely and unbefriended man, a man who has already failed once, and from whom the passing years have stolen his manhood's prime, to work out with painful elaboration, and through a series of bewildering

disappointments, the purposed emancipation? But this is not an isolated case. Throughout the entire scheme of Divine government we meet with the principle of mediation. God ever speaks to men, and works for them, through the instrumentality of men. Chosen agents are called into the inner circle to catch the Divine thought and mirror the Divine character, and then sent back to their fellows to cause them to partake. God never works from the many to the individual, but from the individual to the many. "He made known his ways unto Moses," but only "his acts unto the children of Israel."

¶ When God has something great to accomplish, He begins to work through one man, and afterwards gives other helps; as with Moses and Aaron.[1]

¶ The great revelation came to Moses, the great commission was entrusted to him in the desert, as he tended his flock; as he followed his ordinary vocation. Not in the midst of great public labours, in battle, in victory, or in a moment of utmost peril, was he first penetrated by the truth. It first seized on him in the calm and stillness of life, and then followed action in accordance with it. No condition of life is too lowly, no place too humble, when the pure, bright, transforming fire desires to manifest itself at the right moment to the true Divine instrument. The bush in the desolate waste suddenly becomes to the simple shepherd a burning shrine, out of whose brightness the angel of God speaks to him. The Quaker poet, Whittier, saw as sure a token of the Divine presence in the glow of a maple wood as in the burning bush:

> And when the miracle of autumn came,

so he wrote of one who knew within himself what was meant by "the soul's communion with the Eternal Mind, the Spirit's Law, the Inward Rule and Guide":

> And all the woods with many-coloured flame
> Of splendour, making summer's greenness tame,
> Burned, unconsumed, a voice without a sound
> Spake to him from each kindled bush around,
> And made the strange, new landscape holy ground.

But to him who has no secret witness of that sublime Faith, who knows nothing of communion with the Eternal Mind, such thoughts are baseless and unreal.

[1] Luther.

Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes.

That we be ready to see and ready to hear, this is the all-important thing. The Divine manifestations are not lacking, but we do not take the trouble of turning aside to look at the great sight. The Divine glory beams upon us and we do not rejoice with trembling; we are filled with no sense of reverence and awe; we do not know that we are on holy ground. The Divine word proclaims our duty with unmistakable clearness, and we consider how most easily we can evade it and explain it away.[1]

1. Moses, with the new name of God to reveal, and with the assurance that He is about to rescue Israel, is bidden to go to work advisedly and wisely. He is not to appeal to the mob, nor yet to confront Pharaoh without authority from his people to speak for them, nor is he to make the great demand for emancipation abruptly and at once. The mistake of forty years ago must not be repeated now. He is to appeal to the elders of Israel; and with them, and therefore clearly representing the nation, he is respectfully to crave permission for a three days' journey to sacrifice to Jehovah in the wilderness.

It is often assumed that this demand for a furlough of three days was insincere. But it would have been so only if consent was expected, and if the intention was thereupon to abuse the respite and refuse to return. There is not the slightest hint of any duplicity of the kind. The real motives for the demand are very plain. The excursion which they proposed would have taught the people to move and act together, reviving their national spirit, and filling them with a desire for the liberty which they tasted. In the very words which they should speak—"The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us"—there is a distinct proclamation of nationality, and of its surest and strongest bulwark, a national religion. From such an excursion, therefore, the people would have returned already well-nigh emancipated, and with recognized leaders. Certainly Pharaoh could not listen to any such proposal, unless he were prepared to reverse the whole policy of his dynasty toward Israel.

[1] P. M'Adam Muir.

2. In the message which Moses should convey to the elders there are two significant phrases.

(1) He was to announce in the name of God, "I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done unto you in Egypt." The silent observation of God before He interposes is very solemn and instructive. So in the Revelation, He walks among the golden candlesticks, and knows the work, the patience, or the unfaithfulness of each. So He is not far from any one of us. When a heavy blow falls we speak of it as "a visitation of Providence," but in reality the visitation has been long before. Neither Israel nor Egypt was conscious of the solemn Presence. Who knows what soul of man, or what nation, is thus visited to-day, for future deliverance or rebuke?

(2) Again it is said, "I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto a land flowing with milk and honey." Their affliction was the Divine method of uprooting them. And so is our affliction the method by which our hearts are released from love of earth and life, that in due time He may "surely bring us in" to a better and an enduring country.

¶ She was led for the first time to see, under the intimations of the Holy Spirit, that all things were just the reverse of what she had supposed,—that affliction is mercy in disguise, that we possess by first being deprived, that death precedes life, that destruction in the spiritual experience turns to renovation, that out of the sorrows and silence of inward crucifixion, and from no other source, must grow the jubilees of everlasting bliss. God was given back; and all things with Him.[1]

II.

The Diffidence of Moses.

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?—Exod. iii. 11.

1. The discipline through which Moses has passed has been almost too effectual, for, through extreme diffidence, the prophet of God wants to decline his providential life-task and has to be thrust forth into the path of public service. The reaction from

[1] T. C. Upham, *Life of Madame Guyon*, 125.

the error and miscalculation of youth verges upon a desire for seclusion and retirement scarcely distinguishable from selfishness. Moses now shows a shyness of temper not altogether admirable, which makes him unwilling to touch the problem of the enslavement at all; and he might seem to have a show of reason on his side. In his own view he is less fitted now than he was forty years ago for the work of freeing God's people from their evil conditions. He feels as an English nobleman might conceivably feel who has spent half his life in the bush, and who is told that, within six weeks, he must be presented at Court and move an address to the Throne from his place in the House of Peers. Moses had forgotten the language and etiquette of courts. He may have been eloquent in his youth, but if so the adventures of the wilderness have cooled his temperament and robbed his speech of not a little of its force and readiness. The missionary philanthropist who has passed half a century in jungle, or in Kaffir kraal, may have been a Demosthenes when he embarked for his field of service, but he comes back a man of slow speech and stripped, by the grim realities through which he has lived, of the last shred of rhetorical art.

¶ The call of Moses is the prototype of all calls in the Biblical history of Revelation. All other calls are like it. They all tell us that, contrary to what took place in other religions, the men who led Israel in the search for God did not owe to their own initiative or their own genius the internal light which impelled them. See rather how they struggle in the grasp of God, who steps into their life, turns them back and sends them forth shuddering to face humanity. Not one of them offers himself; they are all taken by force. Not one pursues the normal tenor of his destiny; the revolution they herald begins with their own lives. All have something to leave. Abraham must give up his home. The rest must deny themselves. "Do not send me!" entreats Moses. "Go!" says Jehovah. "Take away my life," cries Elijah in the desert. "Go!" says Jehovah. "I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet," exclaims Amos following his flock. "Go!" says Jehovah. "I am but a little child; let me go!" implores Jeremiah. "Go!" says Jehovah. "Save me from my infirmity!" prays St. Paul. "Go!" says Jehovah. And that one imperious word "Go!" occurring from end to end of the Bible epic, shatters all resistance, overcomes every obstacle, stimulates every heroism, and explains every miracle. It pre-

sents to a bewildered world the spectacle of heroes vanquished but victorious, bending under the weight of their Divine mission, from Moses and his righteous indignation to John the Baptist in the anguish of the dungeon: to St. Paul in his tribulations: to, if I dare say it, Jesus Himself crying out in His agony: "Father, save me from this hour," but "not my will but thine be done." Such is the procession of victims through whom God conquered the world. But in their martyrdom they gave the supreme proof that human nature, left to its own unaided strength, unaided inspiration, could never by its own initiative have given to the world "the salvation that cometh of the Jews."[1]

¶ The prospect of so weighty a work, and of being so distinguished from many whom I esteem before myself, brought me very low, and such were the conflicts of my soul that I had a near sympathy with the Prophet, in the time of his weakness, when he said: "If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thy sight" (Num. xi. 15). But I soon saw that this proceeded from the want of a full resignation to the Divine will. Many were the afflictions which attended me, and in great abasement, with many tears, my cries were to the Almighty for His gracious and fatherly assistance, and after a time of deep trial I was favoured to understand the state mentioned by the Psalmist more clearly than ever I had done before; to wit: "My soul is even as a weaned child" (Ps. cxxxi. 2). Being thus helped to sink down into resignation, I felt a deliverance from that tempest in which I had been sorely exercised, and in calmness of mind went forward, trusting that the Lord Jesus Christ, as I faithfully attended to Him, would be a counsellor to me in all difficulties.[2]

2. From the midst of the bush there came a voice of rebuke, and the message was followed by the miraculous sign of the rod changed to a serpent, and of the serpent becoming a rod again as Moses seized it; and also of the healing of the leprous hand. Perhaps the serpent symbolized the Egyptian power which, at God's word, should become helpless against the life of Moses and the chosen people he was appointed to lead. Confronting once more this virulent tyranny in God's way and at God's express word, he should have no further need to flee from before it in sudden terror. The leprous hand, cleansed at the Divine bid-

[1] A. Westphal, *The Law and the Prophets*, 164.
[2] *The Journal of John Woolman.*

ding, seemed to suggest the healing and purifying change which would yet be wrought upon a corrupt and unholy Israel, contaminated and debauched by its sojourn in the land that was morally unclean. The wonder-working God would be with Moses in the second mission upon which he was sent, and henceforth he should no longer have to deal in the strength of nature alone with Pharaoh's taskmasters and their oft-sinning and unhappy victims.

3. In spite of these signs and the Almighty's own asseveration of the fact that He was the Maker of man's mouth, Moses still shrinks from his predestined work and shirks its burdens. The Redeemer of Israel has to take away part of the responsibility belonging to Moses and to put it upon Aaron; and Aaron did not always discharge his trust as well as the man would have acquitted himself for whom the undivided burden was meant. It might have been better for Moses, for Aaron, and for the ignorant and peevish people themselves, if the shepherd in Midian had accepted God's terms without compromise. Let us see to it that God does not have to put upon others the work and the honour prepared for us. In these last days He has many servants, who, if unlikely to achieve things memorable in this world's history, may yet make brilliant chapters for the chronicles of the world to come. This excessive diffidence, this extreme reaction from the mistakes of youth, this ill-disguised sullenness because of past failure, this sore offence caused by the slowness of others to appreciate our aptitudes and our vocations, may defer the purposes of God among men and rob us of our appointed honour. The former failure is a part of our spiritual education for the later victory.

In the end Moses forgot the shyness bred by his wilderness career, and the discouragements of bygone years, and consented to God's word. He was accepted for the mission to which he dedicated the remnant of his days, and, after many vicissitudes, fulfilled his work. Rejected at first, and welcomed by the families of Israel in the end of his days, he was regarded by Stephen as a type of Christ in everything but his infirmities, who also in the end of the years would find acceptance at the hands of those who once clamoured for His blood. The faith of Moses was made perfect in the wilderness for its coming triumphs, and

he failed at the outset through the meagreness of his trust in the invisible. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king."

"Send whom Thou wilt! All choice is Thine,
Thou canst fulfil Thy set decree
Through other hands more meet to be
Upborne in Thy so vast design;
Lord, I beseech Thee—send not me!"

Had Moses failed to go, had God
Granted his prayer, there would have been
For him no leadership to win—
No pillared fire, no magic rod,
No wonders in the land of Zin;

No smiting of the sea—no tears
Ecstatic shed on Sinai's steep—
No Nebo, with a God to keep
His burial! only forty years
Of desert-watching with his sheep![1]

III.

The Presence of God.

Certainly I will be with thee.—Exod. iii. 12.

God deals very gently with conscious weakness. "Certainly I will be with thee." Moses' estimate of himself is quite correct, and it is the condition of his obtaining God's help. If he had been self-confident, he would have had no longing for, and no promise of, God's presence.

1. God is no longer a voice that calls, a hand that points, an eye that guides. Or rather He is all this, but He is more, very much more. He is the living, burning Presence that destroys not but sustains. He is a consuming fire, but He does not consume. He knows the sorrows of His people because He shares them. In all their afflictions He is afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saves them. Now, we cannot say that, until Moses turned aside

[1] Margaret J. Preston.

to see the burning bush, there was no knowledge of this wonderful immanence in history. No man can be brought into relation with the Living One without gaining some knowledge of His nearness. But it is one thing to have confidence that God will meet us in the way; it is another to awaken to the great conviction that He is the force at the back of our life. It is one thing to wrestle as with a man until the breaking of the day; it is another to stand upon holy ground and listen to the proclamation from out the fire of the ineffable Name. It is one thing to arise and follow God; it is another to find God even in present perplexities.

¶ "To some," says Patmore, "there is revealed a sacrament greater than that of the Real Presence, a sacrament of the Manifest Presence, which is, and is more than, the sum of all the sacraments."[1]

2. So God's promise, "I will be with thee," is not to the man who enters church thoughtlessly and recklessly, but to the man who has an intelligent conception of what God expects and requires at his hands, and who feels in himself utterly insufficient for the step to be taken. It is better to be overwhelmed than over-confident, for only then will our weakness become strength, only then shall we abandon our righteousness and welcome the grace and power and spirit of Jesus Christ, which blot out, renew, vitalize, sustain, and transform, till the believer becomes "complete in him," and knows all things are possible to him that believes in Jesus.

¶ His prayers were, more than any other man's, marked by a sense of the majesty of the Holy Lord God, and a perception of the Divine glory, especially in the earlier part of his course. In his later years Christ was more the centre of all his thoughts, as seems to be often the case with eminent saints; Rutherford's wondrous letters have almost nothing of the Father or of the great God, except as seen in Jesus Christ. In the earlier period of Dr. Duncan's course, his view of the Divine glory was often the same as Isaiah's, "Woe is me, because I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"; and as Job's, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself." Latterly this holy fear was modified, but it continued to the end; and the enviable

[1] E. Meynell, *The Life of Francis Thompson* (1913), 209.

epitaph found on some of our old gravestones might most fittingly have been written on his, "Deceased in the fear of God."[1]

3. But the Christian *life* is not all; the Christian *service* is as sweeping in its demands. Our destiny is not only to be "conformed to the image of the Son of God," but to carry forward the work given Him to do. It has fallen to the lot of His people to save the world; and Christians either shut their eyes to their mission, or, seeing it clearly, shrink from it. No wonder they do so. The very unwillingness of every sinner to be approached on the subject of his soul's salvation, his manifest disinclination to have a loving word said to him about his spiritual duties and privileges, the chilling reception that makes one unable to utter the message that the Spirit of God is moving him to speak, has made us say: "Who am I that I should try to win such souls to Christ? Let them alone." But dare we, when God says, "I will be with thee"?

Let us catch the idea, and live and act by the truth that, like Moses, we are at best only "a poor thorn-bush in a dry and desert world," but with God *in* us and God *with* us we are that bush on fire, and the fire in the bush is infinite strength dwelling in utter weakness. Omnipotence in impotence, then we may forget our past, defy our foes, go forward confidently to our duties, and rise to our privileges, because our extremity is His opportunity. Then we shall cease to make objections when God makes known His will concerning us; and some day we shall sing after we have seen our foes, like Pharaoh, sink as lead in the depths of the sea, and our enemies lie dead upon the shore—we shall sing praises unto our God for all His keeping and using, His sufficient grace and transforming fellowship, and shall rejoice in the blessed experience: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power, thy right hand, O Lord, dasheth in pieces the enemy. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

[1] A. Moody Stuart, *Recollections of John Duncan*, 40.

IV.

The God of Israel.

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.—Exod. iii. 15.

1. The religion of Israel was not in the first instance made; it arose and grew in prehistoric periods; it had no founder; no man reduced it to system. Suddenly a new and higher religion appeared upon the scene. Instead of a vague belief in spirits, the tribes which afterwards coalesced into the Hebrew nation adopted the sole worship of a God who revealed Himself as Jehovah, and they made allegiance to Him the bond of union among themselves. This momentous revolution, which has affected the whole subsequent history of religion, took place at a time when the civilizations of Egypt and Babylon were already old.

Now while it is true that the documents which relate the history of the change were written centuries after the event, three facts rest on sufficient evidence to be accepted at the outset with confidence.

(1) The worship of Jehovah as Israel's only God preceded the settlement in Canaan and the political unity of the tribes. On the latter point we have proof positive in Deborah's song, a very ancient—perhaps the most ancient—relic of Hebrew literature. The poem presupposes that the tribes are still independent. Judah stood quite apart: it is not even mentioned, though the song enumerates in honorific terms the tribes which fought against Sisera, and reviles with hatred and scorn those who held aloof. Barak and Deborah summoned and led the Israelite clans, but there is no hint of any common ruler, any judge in the later sense, whose affair it was to levy troops and constrain obedience. Yet the tribes, though politically separate, were expected to be one in common zeal for Jehovah their God. It was Jehovah who made the people "offer themselves willingly," Jehovah who went down to fight for His people against the Canaanites. The wrath of Heaven falls on Israelites who fail in the supreme duty of

fighting with Jehovah's army. "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." We may then confidently affirm that it was the worship of Jehovah that made the Hebrew tribes one in time of war, till slowly, and long after Deborah's time, they were moulded into a single commonwealth.

(2) Jehovah, then, was the God of the Hebrews when they first came to Canaan: but can we go further back? The earliest authorities which we have tell us that we may. Jehovah, says Amos (iii. 1), "brought up" all Israel "out of the land of Egypt," and we need not multiply references when all the Biblical writers are at one. Their spirit was being crushed out of them, when God sent them a deliverer in the person of Moses. Moses rallied their fainting courage in the name of Jehovah, who was henceforth to be the sole object of their public worship.

(3) The religion of Jehovah *as the God of Israel* began with Moses. He is, beyond all reasonable doubt, a historical character, and it is impossible to understand the rise of nation or worship apart from him. Moses in some way which no man can fathom felt the Divine call; he became the priest of Israel, sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice (Exod. xxiv. 6) and giving the priestly oracles (Exod. xviii., xxxiii. 7–11). The old priesthoods of Dan (Judg. xviii. 30) and of Shiloh (1 Sam. ii. 27) traced their descent to him. Hosea (xii. 13) calls him a prophet, while in Deuteronomy (xviii. 18) he is the greatest of the prophets; and, though the use of the word may be an anachronism, the sense conveyed is altogether true and right. Because he was the leader in religion he also commanded the tribes in war (Num. x. 35 f.), for war was a religious function, and the battle-cry was in Jehovah's name. A great deliverance had been wrought: Moses was the prophet who interpreted it and taught the people the hidden sense of their common experience, and led them on to further victory. Under these conditions the new religion arose. From the time of Moses the religion of Israel was unique. Jehovah, and He alone, was to be adored. He was no mere tribal God, but, on the contrary, a God who gathered the tribes into a national confederation. Other nations claimed the protection of their god by virtue of a natural bond: Jehovah became

the God of Israel by His own free choice. Other gods arose in dim prehistoric times, none knew how: the recollection of the crisis which made Jehovah Israel's God was never lost. Lastly, He had revealed Himself from the first, under a moral aspect, as one who punished the oppressor and let the captive go free.

2. Was Jehovah known at all to Israel before the time of Moses? There are two main hypotheses.

(1) The first is that the name and worship of Jehovah were utterly unknown to the Israelites before their introduction by Moses. In that case, as it is unlikely that Moses invented the name himself, we must suppose that he borrowed it from an outside source. Jehovah would be the God of some alien nation. That the name is Egyptian is a theory now almost universally abandoned. But some scholars have sought Jehovah's original home, not in Egypt, but in Midian. Upon the basis of various superstitious observances, still prevalent in Israel even in historic times, Stade essays to prove the existence of a very low religious level in the pre-Mosaic age, and more particularly of a system of ancestor and spirit worship, which, in other nations usually preceding polytheism, in Israel preceded monolatry. The Old Testament itself alludes in a few passages to a pre-Mosaic period of idolatry. Now tradition ascribes to Moses before his assumption of leadership a prolonged residence in the wilderness of Sinai; he married there a daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian. In an old chapter of the Book of Judges, the relatives and descendants of Moses' father-in-law are called, not Midianites, but Kenites, and are in close alliance with Judah. In the rebellion of Jehu, the usurper receives assistance from Jonadab the son of Rechab, who shows himself an adherent of Jehovah. We learn from Jeremiah that the Rechabites were a family who had preserved the simple customs of nomads as a kind of family tradition, and from the Book of Chronicles we gather that the Rechabites were originally Kenites. It has, therefore, been conjectured that Jehovah was originally a God of the Kenites, and was borrowed by Moses from his Kenite (or Midianite) hosts.

¶ Moses, says Budde, is tending the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro, priest of Midian, when he finds God. He cannot have tended the flocks elsewhere than in the pasture-land of the tribe

to which his father-in-law belonged and whose chief he probably was. For the steppe is by no means ownerless. Every nomad tribe knows its own district very well, and woe to the tribe which encroaches on the territory of another! Yahweh, therefore, is the God of the tribe to which Moses, on his flight from Egypt, joined himself by marriage; the mountain-God of Horeb, who appears to him and promises him to lead his brethren out of Egypt. The tribe with which Moses found refuge and into which he married bears elsewhere the name "Kenite." This would seem to be a narrower term, the more comprehensive name being "Midianite"; *i.e.*, the Kenites were a tribe of the Midianites.[1]

¶ Yahweh is closely associated with *Sinai*: Sinai is called a "mountain of God" before Moses visited it; thither Moses led his people after the Exodus; there Jehovah manifested Himself in the storm-clouds that gathered, and in the lightnings which played about its mountain summit; there He revealed His will to Moses and gave His covenant to Israel (Exod. xix.–xxiv.); thence He marched forth, in thunderstorm and cloud, to lead Israel into Canaan (Deut. xxxiii. 2)—

> Jehovah came from Sinai,
> And beamed forth from Seir (Edom) unto them;
> He shined forth from Mount Paran,
> And came from holy myriads [read probably, with a very slight change in the Heb., from Meribath-Kadesh];

and thither also Elijah repaired (1 Kings xix. 8 ff.), to find Divine encouragement in his despair. Yahweh must thus have been a God who, in some very special sense, had His home on Sinai, and whose worship, in some fuller and more formal sense than had previously been the case, was there accepted by the Israelites. From the connexion of Moses with the Kenite (Judg. iv. 11) Jethro (Exod. ii., xviii.) and the friendliness which subsisted afterwards between Israel and the Kenites (Judg. i. 16; 1 Sam. xv. 6), it has been supposed that Yahweh was the God of the Kenites, and that Israel at Sinai adopted His worship from them. But this view would imply that there was no connexion between Yahweh and Israel before Moses became the son-in-law of Jethro, which is not probable: a new and foreign deity would hardly have been so rapidly accepted by the Israelites.[2]

(2) The second hypothesis assumes that Jehovah was already known to the Israelites as one God out of many, or even as the

[1] Karl Budde, *Religion of Israel to the Exile*, 19.
[2] S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, xlix.

chief and common Deity of all their clans. To this hypothesis, in its turn, the Old Testament gives the support that Moses is represented as charged by Jehovah to accredit himself to the children of Israel as the emissary of their fathers' God. There is also this further argument, that it is difficult to imagine the Israelites rallying round the leadership of one who spoke to them in the name, and urged them to adopt the worship, of a foreign and hitherto unknown Divinity. Moreover, as Dillmann urges, the higher religion of Moses must surely have had its points of connexion with pre-existing beliefs within his people or tribe. By force of the Mosaic teaching, and by the great event which proved the power and favour of Jehovah, the combined Israelite tribes accepted the God of Moses as their own. Religion welded them together. In the name of Jehovah they achieved their earliest victories, and their common patriotism became identified with their common religion.

¶ If Jehovah had been a Kenite god, then in our opinion the Kenites would have become the leading nation and Israel would have been absorbed into it. For it was religion, the characteristic belief in God, which to a large extent determined the national peculiarity of the ancient nations and tribes. That Israel became the leading nation is due to its religion. So the Kenites were absorbed into the Israelites.[1]

3. The question has been raised whether Israel's religion owed any of its distinctive features to Egypt or to Midian. At present little or no evidence is forthcoming in favour of either alternative. The available facts, indeed, tend to confirm the truth of the account given in the Old Testament itself—that the religion taught by Moses was imparted to him by Divine revelation. Doubtless he found in the ancestral beliefs of the Hebrews the necessary basis for his teaching; but the simplest explanation of his commanding influence is to be found in the fact that he was a prophet, divinely chosen, inspired, and prepared for his task, and sent to the Hebrews with an authoritative message from the God of their fathers. The work of Moses was, indeed, in the strict sense "prophetic." He proclaimed the sovereignty of God and declared His purpose of grace. From the first there was an ethical tendency in his teaching and an element of expansiveness.

[1] R. Kittel, *The Scientific Study of the Old Testament*, 175.

The religion of a family or of a clan became under his guidance the faith of an entire people; and the key-notes of the system were practically two: first, the exaltation of Jehovah, the Deliverer of the Hebrews from bondage, as the one Deity of their allegiance; second, the insistence upon social righteousness as His one essential requirement.

¶ Society is made up of individuals, and "social righteousness" is the righteousness of individuals in the mass. But righteousness of character springs from rightness of heart, and apart from the atonement and Spirit of Christ the human heart is wrong. The wail of Cotter Morison was that "there is no cure for a bad heart," and that multitudes of men and women around us have got bad hearts. But, thank God! if "there is no cure for a bad heart," the Spirit of God can give "a new heart," from which springs righteousness. We cannot have a social and ethical revival that will purify the springs of our social and national life, except as the result of a spiritual revival. We cannot have a widespread "social righteousness," apart from a widespread spiritual awakening in which men's hearts are made right by the operation of the Spirit of God.[1]

V.

The Name.

I am that I am.—Exod. iii. 14.

1. It is strange that for some reason this name of God is obscured to the English reader. For the most part it is rendered by the word "Lord." And though the printers have tried to remedy the mistake by printing LORD in capitals whenever it stands for the sacred name, yet the English Version misses its majestic repetition. In this the American Revised Version is to be preferred to our own; for there the Name is printed as "Jehovah," whenever these four consonants occur in the original. Whilst admitting that Jehovah is probably not the original pronunciation of the word, it has so many hallowed associations, that, in face of the difficulty of knowing what the original pronunciation of the word was, use and wont may justify one in retaining it.

[1] T. Waugh, *Twenty-three Years a Missioner*, 151.

¶ "Jehovah" is a modern and hybrid form, dating only from A.D. 1518. The name "Jahweh" was so sacred that it was not, in later Jewish times, pronounced at all, perhaps owing to an over-literal interpretation of the Third Commandment. In reading, "Adonai" was substituted for it; hence the vowels of that name were in MSS. attached to the consonants of "Jahweh" for a guide to the reader, and the result when the MSS. are read as written (as they were never meant by Jewish scribes to be read), is "Jehovah." Thus this modern form has the consonants of one word and the vowels of another. The Hellenistic Jews, in Greek, substituted "Kyrios" (Lord) for the sacred name, and it is thus rendered in LXX and N.T. This explains why in E.V. "the Lord" is the usual rendering of "Jahweh."[1]

2. The words "I AM THAT I AM" are evidently intended as an interpretation of the name *Jahweh*, the name—which in form is the third person imperfect of a verb (just like Isaac, Jacob, Jephthah), meaning He is wont to be or He will be, —being interpreted, as Jehovah is Himself the speaker, in the first person. This rendering appears to S. R. Driver, as it appeared to W. R. Smith and A. B. Davidson, to give the true meaning of the Heb. *'Ehyeh asher 'ehyeh:* Jehovah promises that He will be (to Moses and His people) what He will be—something which is undefined, but which, as His full nature is more and more completely unfolded by the lessons of history and the teaching of the prophets, will prove to be more than words can express. The explanation is thus of a character to reassure Moses.

(1) As regards its form, the word "Yahweh" might mean either "He who creates," "causes to be," or possibly "brings things to pass"; or (much more probably) "He who will be," *i.e.*, the "eternal" or "constant" Being who will progressively manifest Himself in future history as Israel's Creator and Redeemer. This is evidently the traditional explanation implied in Exod. iii. 14. The name was intended to express not what God is in Himself, but rather what He was in relation to Israel: a personal Being willing to enter into covenant with man and to reveal Himself progressively as occasion might demand; a Being self-consistent and faithful in fulfilling His threatenings and promises; able, moreover, to control the course of history in

[1] A. J. Maclean, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* (Single-volume), 300.

fulfilment of His purpose of grace. The name by its very vagueness implies that "no words can sum up all that Jehovah will be to His people."

¶ There are three moments in this revealing name — like a crystal or diamond, it flashes its glory from three sides. First, we have continuity with the past. Stretching back across four centuries of silence, He who is speaking identifies Himself with the God who had appeared to their fathers: "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob hath sent me unto you." Nothing more profoundly impresses the soul than the vivid realization of vast periods of time, and the thought that He who had kept silent for four centuries, that the very God who had environed the life of Abraham, was encompassing him, must have been unutterably sublime. What a concourse of ideas would rush to his mind, what hallowed memories would take shape in that august presence! The lessons of his childhood, the visions of his spirit in hours of secret meditation, his hopes and fears, his questionings and aspirations, through all his great trial and since, would crowd in one conflux of memories into his soul. But the stir and movement of individual reflection are hushed as the great saying goes on. That past is not past. All present, all possible revelations, are expansions of that first unveiling of God. Even all worships of God yet to come, in the gathering light of the growing Divine purpose, will go back to what has been unveiled there. "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."[1]

(2) The source from which either this or any other Divine name was ultimately derived by the Hebrews matters little or nothing: the question which is of importance is, What did the name come to mean to them? What, to them, was its theological content? What are the character and attributes of the Being whom it is actually used in the Old Testament to denote? The name, it *may* be,—we cannot at present say more—came to Israel from the outside. "But into that vessel a long line of prophets, from Moses onward, poured such a flood of attributes as never a priest in all Western Asia, from Babylonia to the sea, even dreamed of in his highest moments of spiritual insight. In this name, and through Israel's history, God chose to reveal Himself to the world. Therein lies the supreme and lonesome superiority of Israel over Babylonia.

[1] John Smith, *The Permanent Message of the Exodus*, 67.

Whatever the name may have been in its origin, it came to be the name of the One and only God; and hence we can await in perfect calmness whatever the future may have to disclose to us with regard to its ultimate origin, or its pre-Israelite use.

¶ In the power of this revelation Moses was able to carry out God's purposes for His people. Distrustful of his own powers, he is strengthened and emboldened to stand before Pharaoh, "and by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king"; for he "endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and Maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?

This is the key to all that Moses accomplished, leadership, legislation, worship, through faith and close communion with God.[1]

¶ The main factor in the development of the religion of Israel was the impression upon the people, through the events of their history and the consciousness of their greatest men, of the character of God. This it was which separated the people from the heathen around them, quickened within them a new moral sense, sifted and qualified the mass of custom and unwritten law which they had inherited as children of the great Semitic family, and finally produced both prophecy and the legal codes, in which the principles of prophecy and the hereditary practice of the nation were together precipitated. But we must not suppose that this revelation of the character of God was confined to His righteousness, or was even predominantly that of His righteousness. That is one of the most widespread fallacies about the Old Testament. Nothing is more certain about the object of Israel's faith than, first, that it was a Person; and second, that the character of this Person was by no means only or predominantly righteousness. Jahweh is as effectively a God of grace as He is a God of justice; and although our meagre information requires us to speak with caution of the earliest period of Israel's religion, it is sufficiently well-established that during that period His grace was (to say the least) as manifest to His people's hearts, and as operative in their lives, as His justice: for the full expression of which we have to wait till the prophets.[2]

[1] W. R. Shepherd.

[2] G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, 148.

What power shall mantle God's ambassador
And trouble Pharaoh in his idol feasts,
Lead Israel forth to Canaan's promised shore,
And make of slaves a royalty of priests?
One only name, the God of Abraham,
I AM hath sent thee: I AM THAT I AM.

Long ages passed, a darker cloud o'erhangs
From pole to pole the universal earth;
And Zion wrestling in her weary pangs
Bewails with tears and groans the hour of birth;
And yet a bitterer cry ascends to God,
"Woe for the chosen people: Ichabod!"

Say who is this in man's extremest hour,
Who comes to ransom man from sin and grave?
This veiled glory, travelling in power
And mighty in humility to save?
The Light of lights, foreseen by Abraham.
Or ever Abraham was born, I AM.

Ages once more have passed away like dreams,
And now creation waits the end of things;
But far and near o'er all the world what seems
Darkens what is with vain imaginings;
And men are chasing shadows from their youth
And grasping unsubstantial mists for truth.

What is that only name of power to drive
The phantoms of deceitful night away,
That dying man may save his soul alive
And stand God's freeman in the light of day?
Hark, on the throne of God, and of the Lamb
The name from everlasting is I AM.[1]

[1] E. H. Bickersteth.

MOSES.

V.

Before Pharaoh.

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Before Pharaoh.

**He sent signs and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.—Ps. cxxxv. 9.**

1. The picture of the departure of Moses from Midian is graphic. Moses takes his wife and his children—"his wife, whom he had won by his chivalrous attack on the Bedouin shepherds," and the children born to him in his exile, and named in two opposite moods of sorrow and rejoicing—and he sets his wife upon his ass —"*the* ass," the only beast of burden that he possesses—and places her infant son, or perhaps both her sons, in her arms, while, leaning on his staff, he manfully trudges by their side. It is no large cavalcade that goes forth, no company of camels with gay tassels and jingling bells, no troop of prancing horses, no pomp of chariots—one ass bears all the treasures of the man who will shortly beard the Pharaoh, and "spoil the Egyptians," and come out of Egypt with much substance; and his treasure consists not in silver, or gold, or jewels, or rich raiment, but in the wife and little ones, which are all that Midian has given him.

¶ As we contemplate the picture, our thoughts go forward to that other narrow household, which went from Palestine into Egypt in the days of Herod the Great (Matt. ii. 14), whose "flight" has been so often represented by painters; to Joseph trudging along the sandy path, supported by his staff, and Mary seated on the ass by his side, and pressing the young child to her bosom. Here the interest is concentrated on the aged man, there on the infant child; here danger is being fronted, there it is being escaped; but in both cases the journey is being undertaken at the express command of God, its outward circumstances are similar, and it is necessary for the accomplishment of God's purposes with respect to man. If Moses does not go into Egypt, there will be no deliverance of the fleshly Israel from their oppressors; if the "young child" be not carried out of the reach of Herod, there will be no deliverance of the spiritual Israel from sin and Satan.[1]

[1] G. Rawlinson, *Moses: His Life and Times*, 81.

2. Somewhere "in the mountain of God," that is, in the higher hill country, Aaron and Moses met. "And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went and met him in the mountain of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord wherewith he had sent him, and all the signs wherewith he had charged him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel" (Exod. iv. 27–29).

The interchange of thought between the two brothers during their long journey from "the mountain of God" to Egypt led to a conviction, in which both shared, that, before any application could, with reasonable prospect of success, be made to Pharaoh, it was necessary that their mission should be fully acknowledged and accepted by the people of Israel. Of what avail would it be to contend with that mighty ruler, and gradually subdue his spirit, and overcome the proud resistance which he was sure to offer to their message, if at last, when the time came for action, the people should repudiate their leadership, and decline to move at their command? Practically, therefore, the first step to be taken was to secure the adhesion of the mass of the Israelites. For this purpose application was made, as God had Himself suggested (Exod. iii. 16), to "the elders of Israel"—that is, to those native officials who in different localities, exercised, and were allowed to exercise, a certain authority over the rest of their countrymen. In Oriental countries, an alien race dwelling among the ruling nation is almost always permitted to have its chiefs or head-men, who control it, act on its behalf, and are the means of communication between it and the government. Among the Israelites these persons would probably be "the chiefs of the fathers," *i.e.*, the hereditary heads of families. Moses and Aaron, though destitute of any legal right to convene a meeting of such persons, regarded it as morally within their competence to do so, and issued a summons, which was obeyed, to "all the elders of the children of Israel."

3. "Afterwards," as it is written,—with what interval we do not know—Moses and Aaron went on their solemn and important mission before Pharaoh. It was a daring thing for these two men to present themselves at all in the presence of Pharaoh, and

much more so on such an errand. A man weak and capricious, arrogant, passionate, and cruel, he set himself on a level with the divinities of Egypt, and took their titles to himself. He was the *Living One*—the *Giver of Life*—the *Gracious Lord*—the *Good God*. And here before this haughty monarch in the midst of his courtiers came the representatives of these slaves with their demand. Brief and direct was the message they uttered, peremptory almost, and little in keeping with such language as Pharaoh alike demanded and received: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness."

¶ Who are these whom God calls *My People*? Are not all people His, to hear Him and to obey? Must not all men render their account to Him? *My people*! We can think that haughty Egypt heard it and laughed aloud—"What, these wretched creatures that dare not call their lives their own! These slaves the chosen favourites of Heaven! No, no! If the gods care for any it is for kings, and for mighty men of valour, for the learned and the great. The mighty Pharaoh with his pomp and his palaces, and this proud nation—we are they in whom the gods delight." *My people*! We can think the Israelites heard it and sighed—"Ah, if I were only one of them—alas, it is not for me to think of such a boast and blessedness." We see the poor slave stand for a moment, lifting the lean and bruised body in the fierce heat of the sun; the fetter chafes his wrist; and now the taskmaster's whip falls upon his shoulders with a curse, "Ye are idle—ye are idle." One of His people indeed! And sighing bitterly the Israelite turns to his burden. Blessed be God—He is not ashamed of His poor children. Ashamed! It is almost blasphemy to put it so far from the truth. No indeed, He stoopeth lowest for those that are lowest down. He cometh most gloriously for those that are the neediest. Never in the whole history of the world did He reveal Himself with such pomp and majesty as for these poor slaves. Of these it is that the word is spoken—"Let my people go, that they may serve me."[1]

¶ The poet Whittier, in the introduction he wrote to the *Journal* of John Woolman, says that the appalling magnitude of the evil of slavery, against which he felt himself especially called to contend, was painfully manifest to John Woolman. At the outset, all about him, in every department of life and human activity, in the state and the church, he saw evidences of its strength,

[1] M. G. Pearse, *Moses: His Life and its Lessons*, 67.

and of the depth and extent to which its roots had wound their way among the foundations of society. Yet he seems never to have doubted for a moment the power of simple truth to eradicate it, nor to have hesitated as to his own duty in regard to it. There was no groping like Samson in the gloom: no feeling in blind wrath and impatience for the pillars of the temple of Dagon. "The candle of the Lord shone about him," and his path lay clear and unmistakable before him. He believed in the goodness of God that leadeth to repentance; and that love could reach the witness for itself in the hearts of all men, through all entanglements of custom and every barrier of pride and selfishness. No one could have a more humble estimate of himself; but as he went forth on his errand of mercy he felt the Infinite Power behind him, and the consciousness that he had known a preparation from that Power "to stand as a trumpet through which the Lord speaks." The event justified his confidence; wherever he went hard hearts were softened, avarice and love of power and pride of opinion gave way before his testimony of love.

When a deed is done for Freedom, through the broad earth's aching breast
Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to west,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels the soul within him climb
To the awful verge of manhood, as the energy sublime
Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the thorny stem of Time.

Through the walls of hut and palace shoots the instantaneous throe,
When the travail of the Ages wrings earth's systems to and fro;
At the birth of each new Era, with a recognizing start,
Nation wildly looks at nation, standing with mute lips apart,
And glad Truth's yet mightier man-child leaps beneath the Future's heart.

We see dimly in the Present what is small and what is great,
Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn the iron helm of fate,
But the soul is still oracular; amid the market's din,
List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave within,—
"They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin."

Slavery, the earth-born Cyclops, fellest of the giant brood,
Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who have drenched the earth with blood,
Famished in his self-made desert, blinded by our purer day,
Gropes in yet unblasted regions for his miserable prey;—
Shall we guide his gory fingers where our helpless children play?[1]

4. It was probably in an audience-room of some splendid palace where the lordly Pharaoh received deputations and embassies that they met him. How mixed must Moses' feelings have been, entering as a suppliant the precincts in which he had played no inconspicuous part in those buried years!

¶ An Egyptian palace was explored for the first time in the winter of 1888–9 by Grébaut, then from 1900 the methodical clearing out was undertaken by an Englishman, Mr. Newbury, at the expense of R. de P. Tytus, an American. Now, after three years, many of the buildings of which it consisted have been dug out and its plan can be clearly distinguished. The few tourists whom curiosity takes there can study at their ease the favourite residence of Amenôthês III., one of the most illustrious sovereigns of the eighteenth dynasty, and they can freely walk through the most private apartments, even those in which the queen shut herself up with the ladies of her suite. The buildings rose from alluvial earth covered by sand, but which was then well watered, and allowed the laying out of beautiful gardens on the edge of the desert. Towards the east could be seen the steep slopes and the peaked mountains of Libya, towards the west and south the fields and groves of the Theban plain; towards the north Amenôthês III. saw the masonry of the funerary temple he was building, and above the line of the cornices the heads of the two colossi erected by his minister, Amenôthês, son of Hapouî, to his glory. The chapels of his predecessors retreated one behind the other to the entrance of the valley which leads to the tombs of the kings, and beyond the Nile, its feet bathed in the eddies of the stream, the Thebes of the living extended as far as the eye could reach; Luxor and its sanctuary faintly outlined. Ashiru with its high grey ramparts, Karnak with its silhouette indented with obelisks, closed the horizon.

Nothing in the aspect of the place authorizes us to conjecture exactly how the family and their servants distributed themselves through the palace, but we can distinguish the grand apartments

[1] J. R. Lowell, *The Present Crisis.*

from those used in everyday life. Two oblong, rectangular walls, supported by two parallel lines of columns, were evidently used as guard-rooms; there the crowd of courtiers and officers of the crown assembled, and on audience or festival days hierarchically took up their positions, each according to his rank. Foreign ambassadors waited there until the moment of offering the gifts or tributes of their masters; generals, on their return from a successful expedition, received there the reward of their victory. Important persons of Thebes and of the whole of Egypt paid homage there to Pharaoh with due eloquence and genuflexion. The semi-barbarous pomp of the Egyptian court pervaded the place with its contrasts of extreme refinement and African barbarity. It was displayed in garments of almost transparent lawn, and in skins of animals, in paint, in tattooing, in flowers in profusion, in strong perfumes on heads and bodies; perhaps solemn banquets were given there, and bestial feasting succeeded the interminable palavers in which sovereign and subjects exchanged the most extravagant compliments, like the negro or Malgache chiefs of our day.

An antechamber of modest dimensions led to the private cabinet of Amenôthês III. Persons admitted to the honour of the royal presence suddenly saw before them, framed by two columns of painted wood, the dais on which the *Majesty of the Living Horus* deigned to reveal himself to them, and, set off against the semi-darkness, the luminous figure of Pharaoh. It appeared to them like a sacred image, in the stiff attitude of sovereignty, immovable, the eyes fixed, symbolical diadems on the forehead, the sceptre and anserated cross in the hands, all shining with gold and enamel. They had to cover their eyes as if unable to endure the brightness of the divine countenance, then to throw themselves flat on the ground and, *smelling at the earth*, to wait until the idol spoke to them. The postures varied according to their rank, and according to the degree of favour desirable to show them. Some were left prostrated, nose against the ground; others remained kneeling, others again stood, but bent in two; some enjoyed the privilege of standing up straight with only the head slightly bent. Like the religious services, the royal receptions were a sort of ballet accompanied with words, each act of which was regulated with an attention to detail enough to have plunged a Byzantine master of the ceremonies into despair. Persons entered amidst singing, and left amidst shouts accompanied by the sound of timbrels, and the conversation which occurred at the interview had to be spoken in rhythm and with carefully studied intonations. A *voice in perfect tune* was required for

addressing the lords of the earth, just as for addressing the lords of heaven.[1]

I.

The Beginning of the Struggle.

1. In order to appreciate the audacity of the demand made by Moses and Aaron, we must remember the unbridled power and authority which were claimed by the Egyptian monarchs. Each Pharaoh was the child of the sun. He is depicted as fondled by the greatest gods, and sitting with them in the recesses of their temples to receive worship equal to their own. "By the life of Pharaoh" was the supreme oath. Without Pharaoh could no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. For him great Egypt existed. For him all other men lived, suffered, and died. For him the mighty Nile flowed from its unexplored fountains to fructify the soil. For him vast armies of priests, and magicians and courtiers, wrought and ministered. From his superb throne he looked down on the wretched crowds of subject peoples, careless of their miseries. What were their tears and groans, and the wail of their bondage, but a fitting sacrifice to be offered to his exalted majesty. In addition, the present monarch had recently, through his generals, achieved certain great victories; and these successes had greatly enhanced his arrogant pride, so that it was in a paroxysm of supercilious scorn that he answered the Divine demand: "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

2. Then Moses and Aaron demanded more precisely (and almost in the words spoken by God in Midian) that Pharaoh would allow the Hebrews to go "three days' journey" into the wilderness. Here two questions have to be asked.

(1) What is meant by "three days' journey"? It is probably a current expression for a considerable distance (Gen. xxx. 36): they ask to be allowed to worship their national God, with such rites as He may enjoin (Exod. viii. 27), at some distant spot in the wilderness where they could give no offence to the Egyptians

[1] G. Maspero, *New Light on Ancient Egypt*, 221.

(Exod. viii. 26). The "wilderness" would be the broad and arid limestone plateau, now called et-Tih, extending from the E. border of Egypt to the S. of Palestine, and bounded on the S. by the mountains of the Sinaitic Peninsula.

¶ The repeated request to be allowed to go three days' journey into the wilderness in order to sacrifice is apparently unmeaning to one who does not know Sinai (Exod. iii. 18, viii. 27). But the waterless journey of three days to Wady Gharandel impresses itself on any one who has to arrange for travelling. It is so essential a feature of the road that this may well have been known as the "three days in the wilderness," in contrast to the road to 'Aqabah, which is six or seven days in the wilderness. To desire to go the "three days' journey in the wilderness" was probably really an expression for going down to Sinai.[1]

(2) In what sense is the request meant? If, says Driver, as has been supposed, it was intended merely as an excuse for getting a good start for their subsequent flight, then it was clearly a case of deception: the Israelites would in this case have sought to obtain from Pharaoh by a ruse what, if he had known their entire purpose, he would not have granted. It is not however said that, if the request had been acceded to, they would not have returned when the three days' festival was over; so it may have been intended merely to test the feeling of Pharaoh towards the Israelites; to serve their God in their own way was in itself "the smallest request that subjects could make of their ruler"; and if this request had been viewed favourably by Pharaoh, the door might have been opened for further negotiations, and the people might eventually have been allowed to depart altogether; the request was *not* granted, and so it resolved itself in the end into a demand for the unconditional release of the people and their actual departure.

3. Turning sharply on the two brethren, Pharaoh accused them of hindering their people's toils, and bade them begone to their own share in the clay-pit, or the brick-kiln: "Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens." What a bitter taunt there was in that last sentence! How the royal lip curled as it was uttered! Already the heart had begun to harden! And so the audience ended, and

[1] W. M. F. Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, 203.

the brothers came down the crowded corridors amid the titter of the court. A very different scene was to be enacted a few months later, as the news came there of the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea—the last stage of the conflict between Pharaoh and the God of the Hebrews, whose name he heard that day for the first time.

That same day a new order was issued from the palace, emanating from Pharaoh himself, to the taskmasters of the people. And probably, ere the evening fell, the ominous words had passed from the taskmasters to the head-men who were set over their fellow-Hebrews, and were, therefore, responsible for the daily delivery of a certain tale of bricks, that they must expect no more straw, though the daily returns must be maintained. "Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw. Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished."

> Our God's not like to Pharaoh; to require
> His tale of bricke, and give no straw for fire:
> His workmen wanted straw, and yet were lasht
> For not performance: We have straw unthrasht,
> Yet we are idle, and we winch, and kicke:
> Against our burthens, and returne no bricke;
> We spend our straw, for litter in the stable,
> And then we cry; Alas, we are not able;
> Think not on Israel's suff'rings, in that day,
> When Thy offended Justice shall repay
> Our labours; Lord, when Thou upheav'st Thy rod,
> Think, Pharaoh was a tyrant; Thou, a God.[1]

¶ Force settles nothing. When Pharaoh said, "I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go"; and when again, in answer to the plea of conscience, he smote the earth with the hoof of power, saying, "Get to your burdens, let heavier work be laid on the men, and let them not regard lying words. Go, get yourselves straw, and none of your work shall be diminished," he was trying to solve a question of right with the mace of power. And though that brute force was imperial, so constituted is this universe that it was compelled to bow before the right championed by a herd of slaves. Force settles nothing. And this is as true when the force is in the hands of an enormous multitude, paralysing industry in a strike, as when it is lodged in a monarch playing his

[1] Francis Quarles, *Divine Fancies*, i. 81.

dynastic schemes, with a million men, on the chessboard of war. There may be a plea for force at times, as being necessary to arouse attention to wrong, though even within that limited sphere the incidental evils are so great as to justify it only as a last resource. But worth or use beyond, force has absolutely none.[1]

¶ They might be driven to march on to London, Cromwell told his officers, but an understanding was the most desirable way, and the other a way of necessity, and not to be done but in a way of necessity. What was obtained by an understanding would be firm and durable. "Things obtained by force, though never so good in themselves, would be both less to their honour and less likely to last." "Really, really, have what you will have; that you have by force, I look upon as nothing." "I could wish," he said earlier, "that we might remember this always, that what we gain in a free way, it is better than twice as much in a forced, and will be more truly ours and our posterity's." It is one of the harshest ironies of history that the name of this famous man, who started on the severest stage of his journey with this broad and far-reaching principle, should have become the favourite symbol of the shallow faith that force is the only remedy.[2]

II.

The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart.

Probably no statement of Scripture has excited fiercer criticism, more exultation of enemies and perplexity of friends, than this, that the Lord said, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he shall not let the people go," and that in consequence of this Divine act Pharaoh sinned and suffered. Just because the words are startling, it is unjust to quote them without careful examination of the context, both in the prediction and in the fulfilment. When all is weighed, compared, and harmonized, it will at last be possible to draw a just conclusion.

1. There are three possible methods of explaining this hardening of Pharaoh's heart. First, it may be attributed entirely to the Divine Sovereignty. It may be said that God, by His own power, directly hardened the heart of the king. But this explanation is opposed to the letter of Scripture. Interpret the

[1] John Smith, *The Permanent Message of the Exodus*, 95.
[2] John Morley, *Oliver Cromwell*, bk. iii., chap. 3.

frequent statements that God hardened Pharaoh's heart as literally as you please, but do not forget that it is also said more than once that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go." And again, "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart." Do not say, therefore, that the Bible gives us only the one idea. But this explanation is still more opposed to the spirit of Scripture. It overturns the great fact that Moses designed to move the king. He had believed that the Israelites were a race given into his hands by his God to be his slaves. His priests said so. But Moses said, "The righteous Lord is the God of those men, and of you, and of all men." He was protesting strongly against the doctrine of favouritism. But the theory which ascribes this hardening of Pharaoh to the Divine Sovereignty makes Jehovah like the god of Pharaoh. Secondly, we may attribute it wholly to Pharaoh himself. But the Bible says again and again, "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart." Or, thirdly, we may combine the two statements of Scripture, and we shall thus get at the truth. The way in which the facts are recorded by the writer of this Book is the only way by which the double fact could be expressed, viz., that the messages sent by God to Pharaoh, and resisted, rendered him harder. The messages came to Pharaoh, "Let my people go," and he refused. They irritated him and made him more stubborn,—thus they hardened him, because he thereby hardened himself. How otherwise could the fact be expressed in the Bible? If I tell an intemperate man that he is ruining himself both in body and in soul, and he grows angry at the truth and resists it, does he not become more hardened in his intemperance? And in expressing the whole facts, would it not be true to say that I hardened him, and that he hardened himself? So when again and again the word of the Lord came by Moses to the king, and he refused to listen to it, it is true that the Lord hardened Pharaoh, and that, because Pharaoh hardened himself.

¶ I expected every wave would have swallowed us up, and that every time the ship fell down, as I thought in the trough or hollow of the sea, we should never rise more; and in this agony of mind I made many vows and resolutions, that if it would please

God and spare my life here this one voyage, if ever I got once my foot upon dry land again, I would go directly home to my father, and never set it into a ship again while I lived. These wise and sober thoughts continued all the while the storm continued, and indeed some time after; but the next day the wind was abated and the sea calmer, and I began to be a little inured to it. . . . In a word, as the sea was returned to its smoothness of surface and settled calmness by the abatement of that storm, so, the fury of my thoughts being over, my fears and apprehensions of being swallowed up by the sea being forgotten, and the current of my former desires returned, I entirely forgot the vows and promises that I made in my distress.[1]

2. But do not these words, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," distinctly describe God as the author of something in man which is pronounced to be utterly wrong? Is He not said to have foreseen Pharaoh's sin, and not only to have foreseen but to have produced it? After pleading for the literal interpretation of Scripture, must we not take refuge in some figurative, unnatural sense of this language, in order to avoid the worse alternative of finding in it a positive denial of God's goodness? Let us reflect upon the previous statements of the historian. The Lord, he said, had seen the affliction of His people, and heard their cry, and knew their sorrows. He determined to deliver them. He commanded Pharaoh, their oppressor, to let them go. What is the effect of that command upon Pharaoh? It irritates and provokes him. And He who sent the command produced the irritation and provocation. But "hardening the heart"! That is so much stronger a phrase than merely "irritating and provoking." Assuredly it is. The one may point merely to a temporary excitement; the other indicates a continual process. But if you have admitted the possibility and even the propriety of one form of language, let us see whether it does not naturally, inevitably pass into the other. Moses says that God not only sent the command to Pharaoh, but He sent one punishment after another to him for resisting that command. It does not surprise us to be told that some of these punishments shook the heart of the king for a moment, but that presently he relapsed into his previous determination, and that after each new act of remorse

[1] *Robinson Crusoe.*

and each new effort to throw it off, he became harder and more obstinate. We know enough of ourselves and of our fellow-men to feel that such a statement is reasonable, that it has even a great air of probability. Must we not say then that the punishment itself hardens the heart? And if we have the same strong conviction as Moses had, that the punishment was the deliberate act of a Person, can we help saying that *He* hardened the heart?

¶ The words are strong, but we shall, I believe, find that these words of Scripture are most necessary to us—for the very purpose of making us understand the awful contradiction which there may be between the will of a man and the will of his Creator; how that contradiction may be aggravated by what seemed to be means for its cure; how it may be effectually cured. The subject is a very profound and awful one. But it is one which we must face in the actual work of life, and which we therefore should not refuse to face when it presents itself to us on the page of Scripture. I find the startling words respecting Pharaoh justifiable, because I do not find that I can describe facts of everyday occurrence in ourselves, if I may not have recourse to them.[1]

¶ The hardening effects of sin, which save from pain, are worse judgments than the sharpest suffering. Anguish is, I am more and more sure, corrective; hardness has in it no hope. Which would you choose if you were compelled to make a choice?—the torture of a dividing limb granulating again, and by the very torture giving indications of life, or the painlessness of mortification; the worst throb from the surgeon's knife, or ossification of the heart? In the spiritual world the pangs of the most exquisite sensitiveness cut to the quick by the sense of fault and aching almost hopelessly, but leaving conscience still alive and aspiration still uncrushed, or the death of every remnant of what is good, the ossification of the soul, the painless extinction of the moral being, its very self?[2]

¶ Suleiman, a teacher in a school of the Irish Presbyterian Church in Nebk, who made most careful investigations for me during more than two months, interviewing Moslems and Christians, Fellahin and Bedouin, at the suggestion of Rev. J. Stewart Crawford, said, as the result of many interviews with many kinds of people: "Their view is that God is the creator of heaven and earth, the maker of all men, the giver of good to all. He may also lead astray. The ignorant know up to this point."

[1] F. D. Maurice, *The Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*, 180.

[2] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 239.

This is evidently a survival of an ancient Semitic conception, which we find gives colouring to certain Old Testament passages, as for example when the Lord is represented as saying of Pharaoh, "I will harden his heart," and Isaiah represents God as bidding him, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and smear their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and perceive with their heart, and should convert and be healed." I do not, of course, believe that these passages teach that God leads man astray, but they are certainly coloured by this idea. Another passage, read literally, expresses the view that God makes the enemies of His people guilty—I refer to Ps. v. 10, where the Psalmist prays, according to the Hebrew idiom, "Make them guilty, O God," which the Revisers well translate, "Hold them guilty, O God," or perhaps better, "Declare them guilty, O God"; that is, "Let them suffer the consequences of their guilt." We have an illustration of this meaning in passages parallel to God's hardening Pharaoh's heart, where it is said: "Pharaoh hardened his heart." But the thought that God leads man astray is original in the Semitic mind. So ingrained is the ancient idea, through millenniums of oppression, that anyone in power is responsible for the failure of an inferior, that it sometimes appears to-day in a very amusing way. The following incident, which illustrates this point, came under my notice when I was spending five weeks at a Syrian Protestant College in Beirut. A student failed to pass his examination in French. He therefore wrote a very indignant letter to the French professor, in which he asked the question, in Arab-English: "Why did you fail me?" By this he did not mean, "Why did you declare that my examination was a failure?" but "Why did you cause me to fail?" This was evidently his meaning from the tenor of his letter, in which he claimed that he had done excellent work in French.[1]

III.

The Plagues.

The plagues were signs. Their purpose was to reveal, in a flash of pain and distress, that self-will and pride are contrary to the Divine order of the world, and destructive of all human well-being. It would seem as though the Almighty withdrew the restraints which, in the present time of discipline and probation,

[1] S. I. Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion To-day*, 69.

are holding back the immediate consequences of wrong-doing, so that men might be able to see what an evil thing sin is, and how terribly it injures their own best interests. For the most part, the processes of retribution are so gradual that we fail to connect them with their causes. For instance, in a vague way, we believe that luxury and debauchery ultimately destroy noble families, but, in our hurrying and migratory days, we do not stay long enough to be impressed with the certainty and terror of the Divine judgments. Given some overwhelming act of retribution, like the fate of Belshazzar on the night that Cyrus took Babylon, the heart of humanity instantly recognizes that there is One who judges in the earth.

¶ As our bodies are affected by indulgence in sin, so probably the natural world, and even the brute creation, are powerfully influenced by the indulgence of human passion. Creation, says the Apostle, groans and travails together with man; the revelation of the sons of God is to inaugurate her emancipation from the bondage of corruption. The rending rocks and veiled heavens of the Crucifixion were the natural expression, in the earth-plane, of the love and hate which met in dread collision at Calvary. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that the land mourns and the herbs of a whole country wither for the wickedness of them that dwell in it, and that even the beasts and birds are consumed. It has never seemed remarkable that when the Puritan Commonwealth expired with Cromwell, so vast a revolution was accompanied by one of the most terrific storms that ever devastated Britain; or that on that momentous afternoon when the assembled conclave at the Vatican pronounced the dogma of Papal Infallibility, the reading of the decree was rendered almost inaudible by peals of reverberating thunder that shook the city.[1]

1. What judgment, however, are we to form with regard to the historical character of the plagues? The narratives, there are strong reasons for believing, were written long after the time of Moses, and do not do more than acquaint us with the traditions current among the Hebrews at the time when they were written; we consequently have no guarantee that they preserve exact recollections of the actual facts. That there is *no* basis of fact for the traditions which the narratives incorporate is in the highest degree improbable: we may feel very sure of this, and yet not feel

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Exodus* (i.–xx.), 165.

sure that they describe the events exactly as they happened. "As the original nucleus of fact," writes Dillmann, "we may suppose that at the time of Israel's deliverance Egypt was visited by various adverse natural occurrences, which the Israelites ascribed to the operation of their God, and by which their leaders, Moses and Aaron, sought to prove to the Egyptian court the superiority of their God over the king and gods of Egypt; it must, however, be admitted that in the Israelitish story these occurrences had for long been invested with a purely miraculous character. And if all had once been lifted up into the sphere of God's unlimited power, the compiler could feel no scruple in combining the different plagues mentioned in his sources into a series of ten, in such a manner as to depict, in a picture drawn with unfading colours, not only the abundance of resources which God has at His disposal for helping His own people, and humiliating those who resist His will, but also the slow and patient yet sure steps with which He proceeds against His foes, and the growth of evil in men till it becomes at last obstinate and confirmed." The real value of the narratives, according to Dillmann, is thus not historical, but moral and religious. And from these points of view their typical and didactic significance cannot be overrated. The traditional story of the contest between Moses and Pharaoh is applied so as to depict, to use Dillmann's expression, "in unfading colours," the impotence of man's strongest determination when it essays to contend with God, and the fruitlessness of all human efforts to frustrate His purposes.

¶ Dr. Sanday—whose historical bias, if he has one, always leads him to conservative conclusions—has expressed himself recently on the subject, in an essay on the Symbolism of the Bible, in words which are well worth quoting: "The early chapters of Genesis are not the only portion of the Pentateuchal history to which I think that we may rightly apply the epithet 'symbolical.' Indeed I suspect that the greater part of the Pentateuch would be rightly so described in greater or less degree. The narrative of the Pentateuch culminates in two great events, the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai. What are we to say to any of these? Are they historical in the sense in which the Second Book of Samuel is historical? I think we may say that they are not. If we accept—as I at least feel constrained to accept, at least in broad outline—the critical

theory now so widely held as to the composition of the Pentateuch, then there is a long interval, an interval of some four centuries or more, between the events and the main portions of the record as we now have it. In such a case we should expect to happen just what we find has happened. There is an element of *folklore*, of oral tradition insufficiently checked by writing. The imagination has been at work. If we compare, for instance, the narrative of the Ten Plagues with the narrative of the Revolt of Absalom, we shall feel the difference. The one is nature itself, with all the flexibility and easy sequence that we associate with nature. The other is constructed upon a scheme which is so symmetrical that we cannot help seeing that it is really artificial. I do not mean artificial in the sense that the writer, with no materials before him, sat down consciously and deliberately to invent them in the form they now have; but I mean that, as the story passed from mouth to mouth, it gradually and almost imperceptibly assumed its present shape."

2. The question need no longer be pressed: Are the plagues to be regarded as miracles or are they not? The changed attitude of science to religion has changed the whole conception of the miraculous. Few of the recent forms of development in religious thought are more significant than that by which an approach has been made towards a truer perception of the relation in which religion stands to science. Time was when thinkers of the highest intellect and education allocated one portion of human thought to religion as its exclusive domain, and another to science. They were as rivals in adjacent kingdoms, neither of which might transgress each other's boundaries. And this mutual opposition was helped by the tendency to make religion equivalent at all points to "faith in the impossible," while "science" was "knowledge of ascertained facts." On each side were exponents who gloried in these respective definitions. The results produced upon the study of the Bible were disastrous. The plagues of Egypt, for example, were either miracles, portents, superhuman acts of God which faith must accept without reasoning, or they were purely natural phenomena. Religious people held the conclusion to which the Egyptian magicians came, that they were the working of the "Finger of God"; scientific people held that such a conclusion was as primitive as the magicians themselves. But this hostility is now rapidly passing away, as it is being more clearly

recognized that religion embraces science as the greater includes the less; that nothing can lie outside the activity of the Infinite God; and therefore that to point out a connexion between some of the miracles of Scripture and natural phenomena does not eliminate from them the Divine element; it rather transfigures an unreasoning "faith in the impossible" into a faith which recognizes the Finger of God in everything, the providence of God in every event of national and individual life.

¶ Great confusion of thought has resulted from the use of two words, *miracle* and *supernatural*; and the meanings of these words have been so twisted that false standards of thought have arisen. We must remember that a miracle is a thing wondered at, without any reference necessarily to non-natural action; everything we *admire* is literally a *miracle*. In the good old words, anything unusual was taken to be "a sign and wonder," a thing which was viewed as a token of interposition in human affairs, and therefore a matter of astonishment. But the notion of such a phrase implying non-natural action has only grown up with the modern view of natural law. To most ages of mankind there was no dividing line between natural and non-natural; so much is inexplicable to the untrained mind that no trouble was taken to define whether an event would happen in the natural course or not. And events which were well known to be purely in the natural course were viewed as occurring at a special time in order to influence human affairs. As a Rumanian Jew said to me, "I come from a land where miracles happen every day; there is no difficulty about miracles." His countrymen have still the antique mind, which views events as wonders fitted to their daily life. To transfer the statements and views of people in that frame of mind into the precise phraseology of the present age—when the infinitesimal variations of natural laws are the passion of men's lives—is completely hopeless and absurd. To take a parallel case, unless we renounce volition and proclaim ourselves helpless automata, we must recognize the forces of our wills which control nature. Yet these are beyond the grasp of modern phraseology, and we can no more translate all our mental processes into automatic formulæ than we can translate the records of the Old Testament into purely modern views. The other word which has done so much harm is *supernatural*, because it is used for two ideas which we have learned in modern times to carefully keep apart. When the extent of natural law was but little understood, the difference between *co-natural* action and *non-natural* action was dimly seen and little regarded. To those who have learned to see in so much

of nature the systems of definite cause and effect, this difference is vital; and to continue to use one word with two entirely different meanings is an incessant obstacle to thought. The larger question of non-natural action is outside the scope of these inquiries; all of the events in the records which we touch on here are expressly referred by their writers to co-natural action. A strong east wind drives the Red Sea back; another wind blows up a flock of quails; cutting a rock brings a water supply to view; and the writers of these accounts record such matters as wondrous benefits of the timely action of natural causes.[1]

¶ At different times Signor and Lord Tennyson had confided to each their conclusions upon religious beliefs, and Signor told me he had found that their ideas were identical. The world cannot get on without a personal God. One whose law is stronger than himself is conceivable—He may know that this is best. The Greeks perceived this truth and called the law "the Fates." The Hebrew conception of a god who can break his own laws to exhibit his power is not so convincing of greatness as is the Power that works within a self-imposed order for higher purposes than the human mind can comprehend. "The Divine Essence is the law Himself; He can no more break a law than He can do away with Himself. This has been perceived in part, for in the earliest miracles, such as the feeding of Elijah in the desert, God does not enable him to do without food, as Omnipotence certainly could have done, but uses means to give him that food."[2]

3. It is important to notice that the plagues all stand in close connexion with the natural conditions of Egypt, and, as represented in the narrative, are in fact just miraculously intensified forms of the diseases or other natural occurrences to which the country is still more or less liable. Every June, when the annual inundation begins, the Nile assumes a reddish colour, due to the red marl brought down from the Abyssinian mountains. Frogs, gnats, flies, and locusts are common pests of the country. Destructive murrains or cattle plagues have occurred in Egypt during the last century. Cutaneous eruptions ("boils") are common there. Hailstones, accompanied by lightning, though unusual, are not unknown. The darkness was probably the result of the hot wind called the Hamsin, which blows at intervals for nearly two months

[1] W. M. F. Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, 201.
[2] *George Frederic Watts*, ii. 165.

every year, frequently fills the air with thick clouds of dust and sand, and obliges people, while it lasts, to remain indoors. Malignant epidemics, accompanied sometimes by great mortality, are frequently mentioned by historians and travellers.

¶ There was nothing in the plagues themselves that was either supernatural or contra-natural. They were all characteristic of Egypt and of Egypt alone. They were *signs and wonders*, not because they introduced new and unknown forces into the life of the Egyptians, but because the diseases and plagues already known to the country were intensified in action and crowded into a short space of time.[1]

¶ If Professor Sayce knew India as well as he knows Egypt, he would not say that these plagues were characteristic of Egypt *alone*. India's present representatives of the plagues leave Egypt nowhere in the competition. Snakes, frogs, lice, flies, cattle-plague, boils, hail, sand-storms and cholera are at home in India. Rivers that turn red in flood are on a larger scale and sand-storms are more dense in India than in Egypt. But it is difficult to understand how cholera, looked on as a purely natural cause, could account for the death of the firstborn in one night. What, however, cannot be accepted in any wise is the suggestion that the annual phenomenon of the Nile flood could be looked upon as a *plague*. The "red water" (as it is called by the natives, though the colour would be more correctly described as deep chocolate) arrives in Egypt annually in August and September, and is highly valued for its fertilizing properties by all landowners. A traveller in Egypt gives an account of a festival in honour of the rise of the flood in A.D. 1047, and describes how crowds bathed in the turbid waters of the flood in the belief that the water of their sacred river had, at the time of the full rise, virtue to cure the sick, to strengthen the young and weak, and to make the barren woman a joyful mother of children. If a thousand years ago the red flood water was looked upon as a blessing, it is a thing inconceivable that three thousand years ago the Egyptians, after experience of seven years' famine and seven years' plenty, if they had had no other experience, should have been so unobservant as not to reckon the red water of the flood a blessing too. This suggestion, then, must be rejected as the explanation of the plague of water being turned into blood so that the fish died and the people could not drink of it. "Red" Nile water has no harmful effect on fish, or on those that drink it.[2]

[1] A. H. Sayce, *Early History of the Hebrews*, 169.
[2] R. H. Brown, *The Land of Goshen*, 65.

4. When we examine the plagues in detail, we discover that it is no arbitrary fancy which divides them into three triplets, leading up to the appalling tenth. Thus the first, fourth, and seventh, each of which begins a triplet, are introduced by a command to Moses to warn Pharaoh "in the morning" (Exod. vii. 15), or "early in the morning" (viii. 20, ix. 13). The third, sixth, and ninth, on the contrary, are inflicted without any warning whatever. The story of the third plague closes with the defeat of the magicians, the sixth with their inability to stand before the king, and the ninth with the final rupture, when Moses declares, "I will see thy face again no more" (viii. 19, ix. 11, x. 29). The first three are plagues of loathsomeness — bloodstained waters, frogs, and lice; the next three bring actual pain and loss with them—stinging flies, murrain which afflicts the beasts, and boils upon all the Egyptians; and the third triplet are "nature-plagues" —hail, locusts, and darkness. It is only after the first three plagues that the immunity of Israel is mentioned; and after the next three, when the hail is threatened, instructions are first given by which those Egyptians who fear Jehovah may also obtain protection. Thus, in orderly and solemn procession, marched the avengers of God upon the guilty land.

5. The tenth plague stands by itself. It is the death of the firstborn. The death of the firstborn was the great climax, reached gradually and in growing severity. From the first this was set forth as the penalty of Pharaoh's refusal to let Israel go. Before Moses had set out for Egypt this was given to him as the message from God: "Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn; and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." Nine plagues had already come upon the land: but hitherto the power of God had been shown by punishing rather than by destroying. More and more severe became these plagues until the cattle and the persons of the Egyptians began to be stricken, and in the plague of the hail those that refused to heed the voice of Moses and to seek shelter were slain. Then came the plague of darkness. Nothing produced so deep an impression upon the king and people as did this, and certainly none was so terrible.

(1) The first thing to be observed in the passage which contains the account of the tenth plague (Exod. xi. 1–10) is that it interposes a solemn pause between the preceding ineffectual plagues and the last effectual one. There is an awful lull in the storm before the last crashing hurricane which lays every obstacle flat. "There is silence in heaven" before the final peal of thunder.

(2) One cannot but note in Moses' prediction of the last plague the solemn enlargement on the details of the widespread calamity, which is not unfeeling gloating over an oppressor's misery, but a yearning to save from hideous misery by timely and plain depicting of it. There is a flash of national triumph in the further contrast between the universal wailing in Egypt and the untouched security of the children of Israel, but that feeling merges at once into the higher one of the Lord's gracious action in establishing the difference between them and their oppressors.

¶ I grant you that the destruction of the Egyptian firstborn and that of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea are startling and awful events, as the perishing of any number of human beings by any hurricane, pestilence, shipwreck, must be. Why do you think these more so than others? Is it because you have arrived at some knowledge of the future condition of these particular sufferers, which you have not in the other case? How did you arrive at it? The Bible tells you nothing about it. We merely hear that the firstborn died, that the hosts of the Egyptians went down into the sea. I know nothing more of them, except that they are not gone out of God's sight because they are gone out of mine, and that the judge of all the earth will do right. The Bible gives me that assurance. I find it a very soothing and comforting one. I could not bear to look upon the facts which are passing every day before our eyes if I had not this assurance. The belief that the Egyptians were drowned as much as the Israelites were saved, because "the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever," can help me to look upon problems which I have no skill to solve, without horror, nay, with confidence and hope. Take away that belief,—give us no hint, no example to guide us in considering the ways of God to His creatures,—and we should sink back into the conclusions which we all feel to be so natural to us, which all men without help have sunk into. The predominance of evil would lead us to think that it is the everlasting law of the world instead of the transgression and violation of its law.[1]

[1] F. D. Maurice, *The Patriarchs and Lawgivers of the Old Testament*, 195.

In vain we judgments feel, and wonders see;
In vain did God to descend hither deign,
He was His own ambassador in vain,
Our Moses and our guide Himself to be.
We will not let ourselves to go,
And with worse harden'd hearts, do our own Pharaohs grow;
Ah! lest at last we perish so.
Think, stubborn Man! think of th' Egyptian prince,
(Hard of belief and will, but not so hard as thou)
Think with what dreadful proofs God did convince
The feeble arguments that human pow'r could shew;
Think what plagues attend on thee,
Who Moses' God dost now refuse more oft than Moses he.[1]

IV.

The Passover.

The great deliverance from Egypt now close at hand was both the birthday of the nation, looked back to as such in all future generations, and a great landmark in the history of redemption. Israel, before this time little more than a collection of families of one race, with common traditions and religion, was now to have a unified national life; and it was also to be conscious of a definite Divine call, and a religious separation from all the other nations of the earth. The new nation was to be also a church, a "theocracy," under the direct rule of Jehovah. This great turning point was marked as the beginning of a new era, with new religious institutions. The calendar was to begin afresh from the day of deliverance; the month of Nisan or Abib (March 21–April 20, the month of green corn) was to be counted for the first month of the year. The Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, and the consecration of the firstborn, were instituted as perpetual memorials.

¶ It was to God above all James Taylor sought to be faithful, and he was possessed by a profound conviction of His infinite faithfulness. He took the Bible very simply, believing it was of all books the most practical if put to the test of experience. In this too he met with fullest sympathy from the young wife who was herself so loyal to the Lord. On a day they could never

[1] A. Cowley, *Pindaric Odes.*

forget, in their first winter together, he sought her, Bible in hand, to talk over a passage that had impressed him. It was part of the thirteenth chapter of Exodus, with the corresponding verses in Numbers:

> "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn
> All the firstborn are mine . . .
> Mine shall they be . . .
> Set apart unto the Lord."

Long and earnest was the talk that followed in view of the happiness to which they were looking forward. Their hearts held back nothing from the Lord. With them it was not a question of how little could be given but how much. Did the Lord claim the best gift of His own giving? Their child was more their own for being His. To such parents what could be more welcome than the invitation, nay, command, to set apart their dearest thus to Him? And how precious the Divine assurance, "It is Mine," not for time only but for eternity. Together they knelt in the silence to fulfil as literally as possible an obligation they could not relegate to Hebrew parents of old. It was no ceremony to be gone through merely, but a definite transaction, the handing over of their best to God, recalling which the mother wrote long after: "This act of consecration they solemnly performed upon their knees, asking for the rich influence of the Holy Spirit," that their firstborn might be "set apart" indeed from that hour. And just as definitely the Lord responded, giving them faith to realize that He had accepted the gift; that henceforth the life so dear to them was their own no longer, but must be held at the disposal of a higher claim, a deeper love than theirs.

Thus spring-time came again touching with tender loveliness those Yorkshire hills and valleys, and on May 21, 1832, this child of many prayers was born, and named after both parents, James Hudson Taylor.[1]

1. The religious historians of the Hebrews connected the Passover with the Exodus. But there are indications that its origin lay behind the Exodus in a far-off past. And though we here enter upon a region of inference and deduction, a truer and larger view will be gained of God's methods in dealing with His people when it is seen that the Passover was a primitive institution, engrained in the earlier life of Israel, and that their

[1] *Hudson Taylor in Early Years*, 33.

religious genius, by Divine inspiration, took it up and transformed it into something greater and deeper. It is noticeable that in Exod. xii. 21 "the Passover" is abruptly introduced as something already well known; and that the Israelites had repeatedly asked permission from Pharaoh to separate themselves three days' journey, for the purpose of holding a pilgrimage and of offering sacrifice (iii. 18, v. 1, vii. 16, viii. 27, x. 9). It would seem, therefore, that they made an annual festival which had come down to them from their fathers the reason—or the ostensible reason—for leaving Egypt. Moreover Pharaoh does not appear to have seen anything strange in the request; he merely refused to grant it. If, then, the Passover was a very early nomad institution, the original meaning of it must be sought partly from the ritual details, and partly from the customs of Arabian nomads of the present day, who are very tenacious of ancient traditions and habits.

2. Thus the Jews regard the Passover, *first*, as the festival of the public foundation of their religion, when it passed from its family stage to the national stage, just as it was destined to pass from its national stage to one broader and more universal. For the Jews are no longer a nation, but only a religious brotherhood, and their faith knows no difference of race or nation any more. But the Passover may be regarded, *secondly*, as the great festival of freedom. Liberty or freedom has been abused, as other good things have been abused and put to ignoble uses, but it is none the less a good thing in itself. Whenever and wherever there is oppression of the weak by the strong, of the poor by the rich, or of one race by another, they who are knit together by the common celebration of the Passover ought to feel righteous indignation, and do all that lies in their power to remedy the wrong.

¶ The only recorded celebrations of the Passover in the Old Testament, like the Egyptian Festival, inaugurate some new step in the nation's history.

(1) In the days of Joshua the manna ceased, when the Passover had been kept, and the people began to eat the corn of Canaan (Josh. v. 10–11 P).

(2) When Hezekiah kept the Passover, he had purified the land for the true worship of Jehovah (2 Chron. xxx.).

(3) Josiah began his reformation, in accordance with the newly discovered Law, by a solemn Passover (2 Kings xxiii. 21–23).

(4) When the second temple was dedicated a paschal celebration is recorded (Ezra vi. 22). In the preceding verse it is said that the children of the captivity had separated themselves from "filthiness of the heathen of the land."[1]

3. The Passover ritual, as appointed here, divides itself into two main parts—the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood on the door-posts and lintels, and the feast on the sacrifice.

(1) *The ritual of the protecting blood.*—Whether readers accept the doctrines of substitution and expiation or not, it ought to be impossible for an honest reader of this passage to deny that these doctrines or thoughts are there. They may be only the barbarous notions of a half-savage age and people. But, whatever they are, there they are. The lamb without blemish, carefully chosen and kept for four days, till it had become as it were part of the household, and then solemnly slain by the head of the family, was their representative. When they sprinkled its blood on the posts, they confessed that they stood in peril of the destroying angel by reason of their impurity, and they presented the blood as their expiation. In so far, their act was an act of confession, deprecation, and faith. It accepted the divinely-appointed means of safety. The consequence was exemption from the fatal stroke, which fell on all homes, from the palace to the slave's hovel, where that red streak was not found. If any son of Abraham had despised the provision for safety, he would have been partaker of the plague.

(2) *The festal meal on the sacrifice.*—After the sprinkling of the blood came the feast. Only when the house was secure from the destruction which walked in the darkness of that fateful night could a delivered household gather round the board. That which had become their safety now became their food. Other sacrifices were, at a later period, modelled on the same type; and in all cases the symbolism is the same, namely, joyful participation in the sacrifice, and communion with God based upon expiation. In the Passover, this second stage received for future ages the further meaning of a memorial. But on that first night it was only such by

[1] F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Biblical History of the Hebrews*, 67.

anticipation, seeing that it preceded the deliverance which it was afterwards to commemorate.

4. No study of the Passover would be complete which did not take account of St. Paul's words in 1 Cor. v. 7, "our paschal Victim also hath been slain, even Christ." It is one of the fundamental factors in the growth of Christianity out of the Hebrew germ that in the highest act of Christian worship all the main features in the Passover are taken up and receive their full and eternal significance. The Firstborn, the chosen "Lamb of God," without blemish, slain once for all, is continually offered; the feast is continually spread through which the faithful partaker enters anew into vital union with God; and the atoning virtue of "the Blood of the Lamb" is continually effectual for the salvation of every heart upon which it is sprinkled.

¶ As the angel of death passed by the Israelites when he saw the blood on the lintel, so shall the angel of retribution spare those who have found refuge in the Cross. Flippant men suppose that nothing is easier than the forgiveness of sin. They cannot believe that it presents any difficulty to God. But it has justly been said, "A fault is not effaced because we reproach ourselves with it." No, it strikes infinitely deeper than that; it loudly calls for atonement or punishment, and all revelation teaches that the supreme act of Divine wisdom and power was the provision of redemption for a world of sinners. That redemption is in the blood of Christ, shed for me. "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him." I do not understand the mystery of redemption, as I do not understand many other mysteries: but if I am not forgiven, healed, perfected through the Crucified, I see no other way of escape from the law of retribution. It is either the red cross or the red sword.[1]

Slain for man, slain for me, O Lamb of God, look down;
Loving to the end look down, behold and see:
Turn Thine Eyes of pity, turn not on us Thy frown,
O Lamb of God, slain for man, slain for me.

Mark the wrestling, mark the race for indeed a crown;
Mark our chariots how we drive them heavily;
Mark the foe upon our track blasting thundering down,
O Lamb of God, slain for man, slain for me.

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Gates of Dawn*, 284.

Set as a Cloudy Pillar against them Thy frown,
Thy Face of Light toward us gracious utterly;
Help granting, hope granting, until Thou grant a crown,
O Lamb of God, slain for man, slain for me.[1]

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 31.

MOSES.

VI.

The Red Sea.

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The Red Sea.

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.—Hos. xi. 1.

1. Never probably in the history of the world was there a scene more tragic and more wonderful than this of Israel's deliverance. What a night it is when in every little hut and hovel of the Hebrews each family waits expectant for the coming of the God of Israel—their souls stirred by the strange ceremony in which they have taken part; the blood sprinkled on the door-posts, and themselves standing ready for a journey, waiting for the moment of their freedom. A nation is to be born in a day. Night has settled upon Egypt, upon its palaces, upon the stately houses of its nobles, upon the lowly homes of its toilers in all the land. Now comes the dread moment when the Angel of the Lord goes forth on his errand, whose shadow is the shadow of death. Swift is his flight, and as he passes, lo! the firstborn is dead in every house. Then bursts upon the still night from every side a cry, the like of which had never been heard—"The firstborn is dead! dead!" And all the nation spring forth, as if delay meant further death, and thrust upon the Israelites their jewels of silver and their jewels of gold, and urge them to be gone. And forth marches Israel, a people for whom their God has wrought such great wonders—they and their little ones, their flocks and their herds. Not a disorderly mob is it, but like the host of God, marshalled and "harnessed," or, as it is rendered in the margin, by *five in a rank*, step by step, each tribe under the leadership of the head-man. And over them rise the wondrous tokens of God's presence—the pillar of cloud casting upon them its kindly shade, and by night the pillar of fire to give them light.

¶ A marvellous parallel this story presents to the experience of the individual soul in passing from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. When God comes to deal with a

man in order to effect his salvation He finds him dead in trespasses and sins. He finds that he has forgotten his *origin* as one made in the image of God, his *destiny* as one meant to live in the favour of God. He finds him serving and content to serve the devil. So God's first work with a man is to awaken him to the shame and misery of his position as a sinner. And this is done just as the awakening of Israel was done. The path of sin is made bitter; the service that once seemed pleasant is made intolerable; and, as the desire for deliverance awakens, in the preaching of the gospel it is offered to the soul. So the soul awakens, and, like Israel, often finds the moment of awaking a moment of agony, in which it is tempted to curse those by whom the bitter sense of sin has been aroused. But after awakening comes the time of struggle. The soul at first seeks to free itself. By fast and prayer, by reading of the Bible and scrupulous carefulness of life, the man strives to plague the Pharaoh within him and escape from his hand. But he is not delivered until he comes, as Israel came, to the place of blood-shedding; it is at the foot of the Cross that the grip of sin loosens. It is there that its power is broken. Until a man comes to the Cross the hope of deliverance is vain. But when the blood is sprinkled on the soul the old master is forsaken. We become dead to sin by the Body of Christ, and enter on the new life, and then we lust for this new life. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." New ambitions are ours, we no longer live to ourselves but to Christ; new motives are ours, the love of Christ constrains us, the spirit of Christ empowers us, and for this new life there are the new laws. We pass under the perfect law of liberty, the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.[1]

2. An essential question in any consideration of the Exodus is that of the numbers of the people. A very serious difficulty has been felt by every one who has considered the statements of numbers; and the solutions have been either to declare the numbers wholly fictitious, or to make some purely arbitrary reduction. Before desperately cutting the knot in either of these ways, it is our business to try to untie it, by tracing any possible source for the statements, or any likely corruption which they may have undergone.

The number of men is stated at 600,000, besides children and a mixed multitude (Exod. xii. 37), or 603,550 besides Levi (Num. ii.

[1] G. H. C. Macgregor, *Messages of the Old Testament*, 25.

32). It has always been a difficult matter to understand how so vast a multitude could have been supported either in the land of Goshen or in the Sinaitic Peninsula; or could have been brought out of Egypt in the time and manner related. But Professor Petrie has propounded a solution which is possibly right. The solution depends on the fact that *alâf*, which means "thousands," has also a second meaning, namely, "groups" or "families." And Professor Petrie shows, in his *Researches in Sinai*, good reasons for believing that the *alâf* of the census of Num. i. and xxvi. has been wrongly given the meaning of "thousands" instead of "families." For instance, the statement in words—"thirty *alâf*, two hundred people," has been taken to mean "thirty thousand two hundred people" instead of "30 families, 200 people"—the 200 people being the number of individuals in the 30 families. Professor Sayce states that this view is supported by Assyrian, in which he believes the originals of the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch were written. Interpreted in this way, the first census of Num. i. gives a population of 5550, and the second census —that of Num. xxvi.—5730, figures which appear from several lines of reasoning to be very probable ones. If these conclusions are accepted, the difficulty of imagining the Exodus and the wanderings in the desert of so vast a multitude is, if not removed, at any rate lessened. The numbers, even so modified, are sufficient to leave the Exodus and desert wanderings a marvel.

3. The exodus of a whole race with all its belongings is, one might say, nothing unusual in the history of Egypt. The Israelites themselves in the early days of their sojourn there must have witnessed the exodus of the Hyksos people from Avaris, very likely by the same route as they themselves followed, through the Wady Tumilat to the Sinaitic Peninsula and thence into Canaan, where tradition credits the Hyksos with having founded the city of Jerusalem. The question has been raised why they did not join the Hyksos and leave Egypt at that time; but the period of their oppression had not then begun, and favourable conditions were still granted them by the conquerors of the Hyksos.

¶ Dr. Sayce relates an exodus of quite recent date from the Wady Tumilat itself. Mohammed Ali had it planted with mul-

berry trees, and induced many interested in the manufacture of silk to come from Syria and elsewhere and settle there. As long as he lived they enjoyed immunity from taxation and military service; but when he died and his successor determined to impose these burdens upon them in spite of their protest, they packed up their belongings and departed suddenly in a night, leaving their houses open and the valley deserted, and returned to their former homes.[1]

¶ One of these slave-races in Egypt rose at last in revolt. Noticeably it did not rise against oppression as such, or directly in consequence of oppression. We hear of no massacre of slave-drivers, no burning of towns or villages, none of the usual accompaniments of peasant insurrections. If Egypt was plagued, it was not by mutinous mobs or incendiaries. Half a million men simply rose up and declared that they could endure no longer the mendacity, the hypocrisy, the vile and incredible rubbish which was offered to them in the sacred name of religion. "Let us go," they said, "into the wilderness, go out of these soft water-meadows and corn-fields, forsake our leeks and our flesh-pots, and take in exchange a life of hardship and wandering, "that we may worship the God of our fathers." Their leader had been trained in the wisdom of the Egyptians, and among the rocks of Sinai had learnt that it was wind and vanity. The half-obscured traditions of his ancestors awoke to life again, and were re-kindled by him in his people. They would bear with lies no longer. They shook the dust of Egypt from their feet, and the prate and falsehood of it from their souls, and they withdrew, with all belonging to them, into the Arabian desert, that they might no longer serve cats and dogs and bulls and beetles, but the Eternal Spirit who had been pleased to make His existence known to them. They sung no pæans of liberty. They were delivered from the house of bondage, but it was the bondage of mendacity, and they left it only to assume another service. The Eternal had taken pity on them. In revealing His true nature to them, He had taken them for His children.[2]

4. Regarding the route of the Exodus there have been three views: (*a*) the northern line by Qantara, proposed by Brugsch, and now abandoned; (*b*) the line *via* Suez, and across the Sinai Peninsula to Aqabah,—this was supposed to be needful to reach the Midianites, but there is no proof that Midianites may not

[1] J. G. Duncan, *The Exploration of Egypt and the Old Testament*, 81.
[2] J. A. Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, ii. 24.

have been in Sinai at the time; (*c*) the traditional route by the Gulf of Suez, which in the judgment of Flinders Petrie agrees with all the indications, and which he describes in this way: "The Israelites are represented as having concentrated at Rameses, and immediately after the Passover marched to Succoth. This was a general name for the district of Bedawy booths in the Wady Tumilat, the Thuku of the Egyptians. Thence they went to Etham in the edge of the wilderness, which would be about the modern Nefisheh. Thence they are said to turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, that is in Egyptian Pa-qaheret, where there was a shrine of Osiris, the Serapeum of later times; they turned from the eastern direction southward to this. There was a Migdol tower behind them, and Baal-zephon opposite to them. Here they were 'entangled in the land, the wilderness had shut them in,' as they had not rounded the north of the lakes. Formerly the Gulf of Suez extended up through the lakes past Ismailiyeh to Ero, otherwise Pithom. They were thus, 'encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth.' This is the highest ground between Ismailiyeh and Suez at present, and must have been the shallowest part of the former gulf. Here 'a strong east wind all that night made the sea dry, and the waters were divided,' so that it was possible to cross the gulf and reach Baal-zephon on the eastern shore.

"After crossing they 'went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah' (Num. xxxiii. 8). This is the road of three days' journey, which is defined as such by the absence of any water, and which was the avowed objective named to the Egyptians (Exod. v. 3). It is the marked feature of the Sinai road, and differs entirely from the seven days' journey without water to Aqabah. At Marah the bitter water identifies it with the present bitter spring of the Wady Hawara. Two hours further on is the Wady Gharandel, where there is an excellent running stream and palm trees, agreeing to the well-watered Elim. From thence they encamped by the Red Sea, again agreeing to this route. Thence they went into the Wilderness of Sin between Elim and Sinai; they passed Dophkah and Alush, not now identified, and came to Rephidim, where the main battle took place with the Amalekites for possession of the only fertile strip in the peninsula, the present Wady Feiran. It is obvious that

this route was well known to the writers of the itineraries in Exodus and Numbers, and there is no discrepancy or question left in the matter."[1]

¶ We must dismiss from our minds, when we use the words "desert" or "wilderness," the idea of desolate wastes of sand. The Pentateuch has very few references to sand. The fact is that sand is the exception in the desert or wilderness which Israel traversed for forty years. It will be remembered that the Psalmist sings of "the pastures of the wilderness." We must, therefore, imagine a tract of country in which, though there are no cornfields or vineyards, yet there would be abundance of pasture for nomad tribes wandering with their flocks, and sometimes the broad open wastes, like our downs or commons, widen out into scenes of splendid luxuriance and beauty.[2]

I.

The Pursuit.

1. No sooner had Israel gone than Pharaoh was sorry. The public works stood still for lack of labour. Vast territories were suddenly unoccupied. The labour of this enslaved people was missed on every side, in city and field; there was a sudden loss of revenue and service which he could ill dispense with. And his pride forbade that he should quietly acquiesce in their unhindered exodus. Besides, in their mad haste to be rid of this people, the Egyptians had laden them with jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; so much so that it is distinctly said, "they spoiled the Egyptians." It is suggested by the contributions afterwards made to the building of the tabernacle that Israel was carrying off a large amount of treasure and valuables. "And the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

So Pharaoh pursued with his horses and chariots, and, making a forced march, overtook the fugitives at their encampment by the Red Sea. As the afternoon closed in, of perhaps the fifth day of the Exodus, the outposts of the fugitive host beheld the dreaded

[1] W. M. F. Petrie, *Egypt and Israel*, 39.
[2] F. B. Meyer, *Exodus*, i. 217.

forms of the Egyptian warriors coming over the ridges of the desert hills; and as the night fell they were aware that the whole Egyptian host was encamped in the near vicinity, only waiting for the morning light to swoop down on them, involving them either in a general massacre, or in what was perhaps more dreadful, a return to slavery.

The one man who seemed unmoved amid the panic of the people was their heroic leader, whose faith was the organ of their deliverance. And therefore it is that in all after-allusions to this great event his hand is always referred to as the instrument through which the might of Jehovah wrought. "Thou leddest," says the Psalmist, "thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps. lxxvii. 20). "He caused," says Isaiah, "his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses" (Isa. lxiii. 12, R.V.). The people, therefore, had good reason to remember the ancient days of Moses; for they were made famous by Moses' mighty faith. By his faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.

2. Several records of the overthrow of the hosts of Pharaoh are preserved in the Book of Exodus.

(1) The earliest of these is the so-called Song of Moses, a poem uttered by the deliverer when the Red Sea was passed, "and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore." The refrain of the triumphant ode was sung by Miriam, "the prophetess, the sister of Aaron," who went forth, timbrel in hand, at the head of the Hebrew women and cried, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Exod. xv. 21). The song celebrates Jehovah as a warrior, who has cast Pharaoh's hosts into the sea. "The deeps cover them," "they went down into the depths like a stone." At the blast of Jehovah's nostrils, "the waters were piled up," "the floods stood upright as an heap," "the deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea." When the enemy said, "I will overtake," Jehovah "blew with his wind, and the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." The imagery of the poem is bold, its similes vivid and daring; it recalls Deborah's description of the overthrow of the Canaanites, when "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Were this the only record of the

occurrence, a possible inference would be that a great battle between Israel and the Egyptians was fought, and that by Jehovah's aid His people triumphed, their enemies being driven into the sea and overwhelmed by the waters in a violent storm.

(2) The most ancient prose version of the occurrence says that, when Pharaoh and his army drew near, Jehovah rebuked Moses saying, "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward. And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it." In the night the pillar of cloud moved to the rear of Israel, giving darkness to the Egyptians and light to the people, so that "the one came not near the other all the night." A strong east wind caused the sea to go back all that night, the waters were divided, and the sea was made dry land. In the morning "Jehovah looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud and discomfited the host of the Egyptians." In their discomfiture they cried, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them." For Jehovah had "bound their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily." Then "the sea returned in his strength, and Jehovah shook off the Egyptians in the midst of the sea" (Exod. xiv. 10 *b*–12, 15–20, 24–25, 27, 30–31 J).

(3) The latest account, found in the Priestly Narrative, appears to be the work of a writer who knew Egypt well and had a definite idea as to the locality of every event connected with the Exodus. In this it is said that the Israelites had been commanded to turn back from Etham, and to encamp before Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea. This placed them apparently at the mercy of Pharaoh, who triumphantly exclaimed, "They are entangled in the land: the wilderness hath shut them in." Pharaoh found the people encamped by the sea beside Pi-hahiroth and Baal-zephon. Moses had to bear the bitter reproaches of the terrified fugitives. "Because," asked they, "there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" The deliverer, however, exhorted the people: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." Moses then stretched out his hand over the sea, and the waters were divided, and appeared as a wall to the Israelites upon their right hand, and upon their left, so that they went over on dry land. The

Egyptians pursued after them, and when they were in the midst of the sea, Moses again stretched forth his hand and the waters overwhelmed them (Exod. xiv. 1–4, 8–9, 10*a*, 13, 14, 21–23, 26, 28–29 P).[1]

¶ Ruskin declares that the prayer with which George Chapman, the translator of Homer, ends his life's work, and which is to be found on the last page of his *Batrachomyomachia*, is "the perfectest and deepest expression of natural religion given us in literature." One petition in the prayer runs "that Thou wouldst be always on our right hand and on our left, in the motion of our own Wills." On this Ruskin observes, "The command to the children of Israel 'that they go forward' is to their own wills. They obeying, the sea retreats, *but not before* they dare to advance into it. *Then*, the waters are a wall unto them, on their right hand and their left."[2]

II.

The Passage.

1. The fact of the passage of the Red Sea can be questioned only by an extreme and baseless scepticism. On the principal facts involved—the successful passage of the Israelites, the destruction of the pursuing Egyptians in the returning waters, the principal narratives, and also the Song—all agree; they differ only in details. Dillmann remarks that these details are described most simply if only we do not understand as prose what is intended to be poetry in the Song: a strong wind drives back the waters in such a way as to permit the Israelites to pass through (xv. 8); another wind, suddenly rising in an opposite direction (ver. 10), causes the water to return and close upon the pursuing foe. That natural causes were in operation is taken for granted: Jehovah is glorified for setting them in action, and achieving by such simple means the salvation of His own people, and the destruction of their foes. The marvel lay in the deliverance of the people, whom its leader had ever taught to trust in its God, in the extremity of danger, without its own co-operation

[1] F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Biblical History of the Hebrews*, 55.
[2] Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens*, iv. § 21 (*Works*, xxxiii. 137).

(cf. xiv. 13 f., 31 J); this was also the reason why the event had such immense significance in the subsequent history of the people.

¶ It may appear to some that the miracle of the passage of the Red Sea is after all due to an attempt to express in sober prose the language of an ode of triumph, but it is by no means impossible that the path for the Israelites was made by the wind which drove back the shallow water of the lakes, to the north of the Gulf of Suez. Similar occurrences have been recorded, and are accepted as historically true, and it is noticeable that the early account attributes the safety of Israel, and the destruction of the Egyptian army, to Jehovah's use of the violence of the wind for His own purposes. It seems probable that the Israelites turned upon their pursuers, when their chariot wheels were clogged in the moistening sand, and drove them back to meet the returning waters. In this case the passage of the Red Sea would rank among the so-called decisive battles of the world. Never did a greater issue hang upon the strife of armies than when Israel drove Pharaoh's army into the waves. The future of the human race depended on whether the fugitive Hebrews could escape on that day from the house of bondage or not. Well may Psalmist and Prophet celebrate the victory of Jehovah's people, when "God brought them forth out of Egypt." Well may the Christian teacher compare the passage of the Red Sea to the Sacrament of Baptism, whereby men are brought out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (1 Cor. x. 1–2).[1]

¶ We can see here a frequent characteristic of the miraculous element in Scripture, namely, its reaching its end not by a leap, but by a process. Once admit miracle, and it appears as if adaptation of means to ends was unnecessary. It would have been as easy to have transported the Israelites bodily and instantaneously to the other side of the sea, as to have taken these precautions and then cleft the ocean and made them march through it. Legendary miracle would have preferred the former way. The Bible miracle usually adapts methods to aims, and is content to travel to its goal step by step.[2]

¶ The actual point at which the passage of the Red Sea took place can be fixed only by conjecture; for the site suggested for Pi-hahiroth is too conjectural, and that suggested for Migdol is too uncertain, to be used for the purpose of determining it, and the site of Baal-zephon depends entirely upon those adopted for

[1] F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Biblical History of the Hebrews*, 56.
[2] A. Maclaren.

these two places. Formerly, indeed, it used to be supposed, on the strength of the expressions in Exod. xiv. 22, xv. 8, that the passage took place in the deep water, some miles south of Suez, that the sea there literally parted asunder, and that through the chasm thus formed the Israelites passed, with a sheer wall of water on each side of them. But, if only for the reason that it is impossible to understand how any "wind" could have produced a chasm of this kind, or, even if it could have done so, how any man or body of men could have stood against it, this view has now been for long entirely abandoned. The following are the two views that have been more recently advocated:—

(1) That the passage took place near the modern Suez, either in the narrow arm of the gulf, some three-quarter mile broad, which extends now about two miles north of Suez, but,—to judge from the character of the soil, consisting of sand blown in from the desert on the east,—in ancient times probably extended further, or a little south of Suez: above Suez the water is shallow, and there are parts which can be crossed at low tide; immediately below Suez also there is a shoal, one mile broad, dry at low water. The Gulf of Suez is at this part enclosed by a range of hills on each side—the Jebel 'Ataka on the west coming close down to the sea, and the ridge of er-Rahah, twelve to fifteen miles off on the east; and partly on account of these hills the ebb and flow of the tide is here unusually dependent on the direction of the wind. "As is well known to observant men accustomed to navigate the Red Sea, a north-easterly gale, on reaching Suez, would then be drawn down between the high ranges which bound the gulf on either hand in such a manner as to change its direction from north-east to north, or even a little west of north. It would gather strength as it advanced, and by its action on an ebb tide would make it abnormally low, and prevent, while it lasted, at least for a time, the return of the usual flood-tide. In this way a good passage across the channel might soon be laid bare, and remain so for several hours. In the morning, a shift of wind to the south, probably of a cyclonic nature, takes place: the pent-up flood-tide, now freed from restraint, and urged on by the south gale 'returns to its wonted flow,' and sweeps suddenly up the gulf, probably in a 'bore' or tidal wave, and so overwhelms the pursuing Egyptians."

(2) The other view takes the Israelites across a presumed ancient northern extension of the Gulf of Suez, which is considered highly probable by many modern authorities. The isthmus of Suez, at its narrowest part, is seventy miles across. Near the north end of the Gulf of Suez there extends for some ten miles a

sort of marshy lagoon; then comes the Shaluf, a plateau twenty to twenty-five feet above the sea-level, and six miles long; after this, stretching in a north-westerly direction, the two "Bitter Lakes," altogether about twenty-five miles long by two to six broad, connected by a shallow marshy channel a mile long, which, until an immense volume of water was let into them at the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 from the Mediterranean Sea, were nothing more than two great salt marshes, though twenty to forty feet deep in many parts; at the north end of these lakes there is again for eight miles a stretch of sand, rising in parts into dunes, with a stelè of Darius in the middle, which, from the ruins found there being supposed by the French engineers to have been a temple of Osiris, is now known as the Serapeum; then comes Lake Timsah (the "Crocodile Lake"), at the east end of Wady Tumilat, five miles long by one-half to two miles broad, which, like the Bitter Lakes, till it was flooded for the Suez Canal, was another salt marsh, filled with reeds: three miles north of Lake Timsah, the land rises to about fifty feet above the sea, and the highest point between the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Suez is reached, called el-Gisr ("the Embankment"), the cutting through of which for the Suez Canal was a work of immense labour: two or three miles north of el-Gisr is Lake Ballah; and north of this, between Lake Ballah and Lake Menzaleh, was the isthmus called el-Kantara, or the "Bridge," over which went the old caravan route between Egypt and Palestine. There is no doubt that in remote prehistoric times (before the Pleistocene period) the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean Sea were connected with each other; and it has been supposed that in ancient historic times the Gulf of Suez extended as far north as Lake Timsah, on the south of the ridge of el-Gisr, just referred to; Sir J. W. Dawson, for instance, writing as a geologist, points out that the ground south of Lake Timsah is for the most part lower than the Red Sea, and is composed of recent deposits holding many Red Sea shells (*Egypt and Syria*, pp. 67–69). And so it has been held that the passage of the Israelites was made at some part of this northern extension of the Red Sea.[1]

2. This is the most dramatic incident in the history of the children of Israel. It is the one event which they never forgot. It is written deep in the nation's mind.

(1) *They had passed in that night from Africa to Asia*; they had crossed one of the great boundaries which divide the quarters of the world; a thought always thrilling, how much more so when

[1] S. R. Driver.

we reflect on what a transition it involved to them. Behind the African hills, which rose beyond the Red Sea, lay the strange land of their exile and bondage—the land of Egypt with its mighty river, its immense buildings, its monster-worship, its grinding tyranny, its overgrown civilization. This they had left to revisit no more: the Red Sea flowed between them; the Egyptians whom they saw yesterday they will now see "no more again for ever." And before them stretched the level plains of the Arabian desert, the desert where their fathers and their kindred had wandered in former times, where their great leader had fed the flocks of Jethro, through which they must advance onwards till they reach the Land of Promise.

(2) *Further, this change of local situation was at once a change of moral condition.*—From slaves they had become free; from an oppressed tribe they had become an independent nation. It is their deliverance from slavery. It is the earliest recorded instance of a great national emancipation. In later times religion has been so often and so exclusively associated with ideas of order, of obedience, of submission to authority, that it is well to be occasionally reminded that it has had other aspects also. This, the first epoch of Old Testament history, is, in its original significance, the sanctification, the glorification of national independence and freedom. Whatever else was to succeed to it, this was the first stage of the progress of the chosen people. And when in the Christian Scriptures and in the Christian Church we find the passage of the Red Sea taken as the likeness of the moral deliverance from sin and death,—when we read in the Apocalypse of the vision of those who stand victorious on the shores of "the glassy sea mingled with fire, having the harps of God, and singing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb,"—these are so many sacred testimonies to the importance and the sanctity of freedom, to the wrong and the misery of injustice, oppression and tyranny. The word "redemption," which has now a sense far holier and higher, first entered into the circle of religious ideas at the time when God "redeemed his people from the house of bondage."

(3) And this deliverance—the first and greatest in their history—was *effected*, not by their own power, but *by the power of God*. There are moments in the life both of men and of nations, both of the world and of the Church, when vast blessings are

gained, vast dangers averted, through our own exertions—by the sword of the conqueror, by the genius of the statesman, by the holiness of the saint. Such, in Jewish history, was the conquest of Palestine by Joshua, the deliverances wrought by Gideon, by Samson, and by David. Such, in Christian history, were the revolutions effected by Clovis, by Charlemagne, by Alfred, by Joan of Arc, and by Luther. But there are moments of still higher interest, of still more solemn feeling, when deliverance is brought about not by any human energy, but by causes beyond our own control. Such, in Christian history, are the raising of the siege of Leyden, and the overthrow of the Armada; and such, above all, was the passage of the Red Sea.

¶ Whatever were the means employed by the Almighty—whatever the path which He made for Himself in the great waters—it was to Him, and not to themselves, that the Israelites were compelled to look as the source of their escape. "*Stand still*, and see the salvation of Jehovah," was their only duty. "Jehovah hath triumphed gloriously," was their only song of victory. It was a victory into which no feeling of pride or self-exaltation could enter. It was a fit opening of a history and of a character which was to be specially distinguished from that of other races by its constant and direct dependence on the Supreme Judge and Ruler of the world. Greece and Rome could look back with triumph to the glorious days when they had repulsed their invaders, and risen on their tyrants, or driven out their kings. But the birthday of Israel—the birthday of the religion, of the liberty, of the nation, of Israel—was the passage of the Red Sea;—the likeness in this, as in so many other respects, of the yet greater events in the beginnings of the Christian Church, of which it has been long considered the anticipation and the emblem. It was the commemoration, not of what man has wrought for God, but of what God has wrought for man. No baser thoughts, no disturbing influences, could mar the overwhelming sense of thankfulness with which, as if after a hard-won battle, the nation found its voice in the first Hebrew melody, in the first burst of national poetry, which still lives on through Handel's music, to keep before the mind of all Western Christendom the day "when Israel came out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a strange land."[1]

¶ The chief object of the whole Mosaic narrative seems to be that of emphasizing the significance of the Divine self-revelation implied in Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The marvels of the

[1] A. P. Stanley, *History of the Jewish Church*, i. 116.

Exodus, like some of our Lord's miracles, appear to have been intended to arrest attention, and to rivet Israel's gaze, as it were, upon its Divine teacher. "Jehovah alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."[1]

¶ Mr. Harold Begbie in *In the Hand of the Potter* tells of a man who seeing himself as morally diseased "became the doctor of his own soul, felt the pulse of his moral nature, and kept a chart of his soul's temperature." He kept a register of sins actually committed with a view to their reduction, and betook himself to prayer. Then some tracts came into his hand for printing. In reading the proof this text, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," caught him by the soul, and held the beatings of the brain. These words were like an injunction particular to himself! . . . "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." In vain did he try to shake off their impression. The thought had fastened upon his consciousness. It clung to him like an embrace. He was obliged to stand still. It seemed to him quite clear what he was to do. He was to abandon anxiety, to give up his chart, to discontinue self-examination, to relinquish all striving, wrestling and effort. He was to do nothing. He was to be not active but passive. It was not for him to climb to God, but for God to descend to him. If there was something outside the atmosphere of the planet, it would be given, it would not be captured. The soul receives, it does not discover. Let him stand still and await the will of God. The mystery happened in a night, or rather early morning, in the grey dawn before the man had risen. He came out of sleep with the thought of Jesus Christ. "Under the grey dawn there stood and breathed the Son of Man. Eye could see nothing, ear could hear nothing, hand could touch nothing. And yet he was not alone. More real to him than roof, or sky or trees, was the sense of this invisible presence. Its influence was closer to him than the air he breathed; and its blessing, as real and unmistakable as the scent of violets, was a peace of soul passing all understanding. His mind was at rest."[2]

III.

The Song.

1. On the Arabian shore of the Red Sea, Moses and the sons of Israel, we are told, met Miriam the prophetess, the sister of

[1] R. L. Ottley, *Aspects of the Old Testament*, 139.
[2] Harold Begbie, *In the Hand of the Potter*, 220.

Aaron, at the head of the long train of Israelite women, with the sounding timbrels and the religious dances which they had learned in Egypt, coming forth, as was the wont of Hebrew women after some great victory, to greet the triumphant host. She, the third member, the eldest born, of that noble family, whose name now first appears in the history of the Church, afterwards to become so renowned through its Grecian and European forms of *Maria* and *Mary*, she, who had watched her infant brother by the river side, now hailed him as the deliverer of her people, or rather, if we may with reverence say so, hailed the Divine Deliverer, by the new and awful Name, now first clearly proclaimed to her family and her nation.

¶ The going forth of the women of Israel after Miriam with timbrels and with dances was their expression of passionate triumph and thankfulness, after the full accomplishment of their deliverance from the Egyptians. That deliverance had been by the utter death of their enemies, and accompanied by a stupendous miracle; no human creatures could in an hour of triumph be surrounded by circumstances more solemn. I am not going to try to excite your feelings about them. Consider only for yourself what that seeing of the Egyptians "dead upon the sea-shore" meant to every soul that saw it. And then reflect that these intense emotions of mingled horror, triumph, and gratitude were expressed, in the visible presence of the Deity, by music and dancing. If you answer that you do not believe the Egyptians so perished, or that God ever appeared in a pillar of cloud, I reply, "Be it so—believe or disbelieve, as you choose:—This is yet assuredly the fact, that the author of the poem or fable of the Exodus supposed that, under such circumstances of Divine interposition as he had invented, the triumph of the Israelitish women would have been, and ought to have been, under the direction of a prophetess, expressed by music and dancing." Nor was it possible that he should think otherwise, at whatever period he wrote; both music and dancing being, among all great nations, an appointed and very principal part of the worship of the gods.[1]

2. Unwonted interest attaches to this song—the earliest on record of all the sacred odes, and the very foremost in the annals of the Hebrew race. To the Jewish people themselves, it is what they have long called it, "THE SONG"—a designation to

[1] Ruskin, *Time and Tide*, § 41.

which it is entitled, alike from its inherent pre-eminence and its unrivalled associations. It is Israel's *natal* song. For in crossing the Red Sea they passed through the birth-throes of their national existence, and from this epoch dates a new chronology in Israel's calendar. The oppressed tribes have become a commonwealth; and a commonwealth of the free. It is Israel's *emancipation* song, or song of *liberty*. It signalizes a triple deliverance, marking the supreme moment of rescue from the threefold evils of domestic slavery, political bondage, and religious thraldom. It is Israel's *Te Deum*, or song of thanks and praise to God. An overwhelming sense of the Divine interposition is the predominant sentiment in the song from first to last. It is no mere secular ode; no mere war-song or outburst of patriotic triumph; no exultant shriek of insult over a fallen foe; it was an anthem of blessing and gratitude for a great deliverance, a devout and solemn Psalm before God, to whom, of whom, and for whom it is sung. It is Israel's *Church-song*; the type of all songs of redemption and salvation. The very words "redemption" and "salvation" are first introduced in connexion with this great deliverance. "I will *redeem* you with a stretched out arm"; and again, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see *the salvation* of the Lord." The people has become unified into a worshipping assembly. The nation has become a Church; the theocracy has begun. It is Israel's *triumph-song* of deliverance. The note is that of joy and victory, and is prophetic of the success of every battle and struggle for the Lord's cause and Kingdom, fought in the Lord's name and in His strength.

¶ We can understand the stern joy which throbs so vehemently in every pulse of that great song, the first blossom of Hebrew poetry, which the ransomed people sang that day. We can sympathize with the many echoes in psalm and prophecy, which repeated the lessons of faith and gratitude. But some will be ready to ask, Was that triumphant song anything more than narrow national feeling, and has Christianity not taught us another and tenderer thought of God than that which this lesson carries? We may ask in return, Was it Divine Providence that swept the Spanish Armada from the sea, fulfilling, as the medal struck to commemorate it bore, the very words of Moses' song, "Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them"? Was it God who overwhelmed Napoleon's army in the Russian snows? Were

these, and many like acts in the world's history, causes for thankfulness to God? Is it not true that, as has been well said, "The history of the world is the judgment of the world"? And does Christianity forbid us to rejoice when some mighty and ancient system of wrong and oppression, with its tools and accomplices, is cleared from off the face of the earth? "When the wicked perish, there is shouting." Let us not forget that the love and gentleness of the Gospel are accompanied by the revelation of Divine judgment and righteous retribution.[1]

¶ In the Book of Revelation, when the saints of God stand on the heavenly shore, they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. The victory which they have gained is not due to their own righteousness, but to the preventing and overcoming grace of God. So, they connect their own life-history with the early history of God's people. It is the song of Moses, as well as the song of the Lamb. Even the first victory over sin, as well as all victories since then, have been due to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And at last, when we have been redeemed, when we have been completely rescued from the jaws of destruction, when we see how our evil impulses have been curbed and overcome, then we too will say that not to ourselves, but to the Lamb, are the honour and glory, and we shall place the crown upon the head of our great Redeemer.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren.

[2] A. H. Strong, *One Hundred Chapel-Talks to Theological Students*, 105.

MOSES.

VII.

From the Red Sea to Sinai.

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From the Red Sea to Sinai.

And Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.—Exod. xv. 22.

After the haste and agitation of their marvellous deliverance the children of Israel seem to have halted for awhile at the only spot in the neighbourhood where there is water, known as the Ayoun Musa, or springs of Moses, to this day. There they doubtless brought into some permanent shape their rudimentary organization. There, too, their impressions were given time to deepen. They "saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore," and realized that their oppression was at an end, their chains were broken, and themselves introduced into a new life—"baptized unto Moses." They reflected upon the difference between all other deities and the God of their fathers, who, in that deadly crisis, had looked upon them and their tyrants out of the fiery pillar. They "feared Jehovah: and they believed in Jehovah, and in his servant Moses."

"They believed in Jehovah." This expression is noteworthy, because they had all believed in Him already. "By faith they forsook Egypt. By faith they kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood. By faith they passed through the Red Sea." But their former trust was poor and wavering compared with that which filled their bosoms now. So the disciples followed Jesus because they believed on Him; yet, when His first miracle manifested forth His glory, "his disciples believed on him there." And again they said, "By this we believe that thou camest forth from God." And after the resurrection He said, "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed" (John ii. 11, xvi. 30, xx. 29). Faith needs to be edified by successive experiences, as the enthusiasm of a recruit is converted into the disciplined valour of the veteran. From each new crisis of the spiritual life the soul should obtain new

powers. And that is a shallow and unstable religion which is content with the level of its initial act of faith (however genuine and however important), and seeks not to go from strength to strength.

I.

Marah and Elim.

And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?—Exod. xv. 24.

1. Nothing is so hard to bear as disappointed hope. Bitterness in the fountain to which we ran eagerly for relief crushes us more terribly than the absence of any fountain would have done. To find the alluring vision of a gleaming lake to be only a mirage, the reflection of a burning sky upon burning sand, or to find that what is really water is so bitter that it is like poison in the mouth—there is no experience more depressing than that. We can endure almost anything if we have long been looking it steadily in the face; but disappointment! that is a different thing altogether, and crushes the very life out of us the moment it is met. A very suggestive picture of this is given us in the story of Israel's experience at Marah's bitter pool. After the marvellous deliverance, and jubilant songs on the shore of the Red Sea, they had set out on pilgrimage with highest hopes, expecting that every onward step would only bring them into fuller peace. And yet three days had not passed when they found themselves almost dying of thirst in a sun-scorched desert where no smallest brook crossed their path. At last, a long line of distant palms showed that water was near; but what an agony of disappointment to find only a bitter, poisonous pool of which none could drink!

"Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah." Such was their first experience of disappointment after the emancipation from Egypt. And this life of ours, with all its gratifications and fulfilment, yet sometimes yields disappointment in large measure and very

grievously. In this matter we begin, like the Hebrews, at the very beginning of our pilgrimage. For our childhood's days are plentifully darkened with the lesser disappointments incident to child-life. We may smile, looking back from the experience of our maturer years, as we remember the trifles that made our hearts heavy. But though trifles to us now, in remembrance, they were not trifles then, in childhood's actual experience. They constituted a very real discipline for our young days. It is as though God were putting us through a rehearsal, so early, of the disappointments that will surely come in later years.

(1) The first thing we notice in this passage is that it is an illustration of the vicissitudes of life. Life has been compared again and again to a journey. It is very much like the journey of these Israelites in that it is full of sudden and startling changes. We triumph one day, and are in despair the next. We bask in the sunshine one day, and are plunged in deep night the next. We sing and dance at the Red Sea one day, and we are ready to die by the bitter waters of Marah the next.

¶ We have our Red Sea days. Oliver Cromwell used to speak of the third of September as the day of his "crowning mercies," for it was on that day he fought and won the battles of Worcester and Dunbar, and it was on that same day in 1658 that he fought and won his last great fight and passed to his Lord to receive his crown of life. And in much the same way we have our days of crowning mercies, wedding days, birthdays, recovery days, days when some prize for which we had striven fell to our lot, days when the world to us is full of music and of song. But Marah, too—the place of bitter waters—is a station on our journey, and sooner or later we all of us come to it. When sickness comes, when business fails, when husband or wife or child dies—then we are at Marah, and we cannot drink, for the waters of Marah are bitter.

Robert Louis Stevenson says much in his writings about "the duty of being happy." "A happy man or woman," he says, "is a better thing to find than a five pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of good will." And the doctrine he preached he bravely tried to carry out. Threatened as he was with consumption, doomed from youth to physical failure, he yet tried to turn to the world a smiling face. But in his Vailima letters to Colvin, in spite of himself, he cannot help now and again a sigh and a groan. When sickness assailed his home, when he felt the

shadows of the prison house closing in upon him, even Stevenson found it hard to keep up his smile. I, too, believe in the duty of being happy. We are not to go muling and puling through life. At the same time it is no use to pretend that life is all sunshine and blue sky. And it is an ill business trying to carry to the world a sunny face when we carry in our bosom a broken heart. Moralists may preach as they please about the duty of being happy, but there come days to us in the course of life when we cannot laugh, when we cannot even smile, but when our hearts are filled with desolation and sorrow. "When we come to Marah—we cannot drink—for the waters of Marah are very bitter."[1]

(2) But when the hour of disappointment comes, then is the very hour for God to sweeten the bitterness by showing us a Tree of Life which takes the poison away, and turns despondency into joy. The tree He showed to Moses was not one created then and there by miracle. It was already growing at the side of the pool; and the Lord does not need to create some new consolations for our suffering hearts, a new Bible, or a new mercy-seat, or a new Christ, or a new atonement, or new promises, or new grace. They are all there, close beside us, waiting for our time of need. He has simply to open our eyes to see them, and give us power to use them, and they will turn any sorrow into thanksgiving and praise. Hagar did not see the well in the desert of Beersheba till "the Lord opened her eyes" that were blinded by tears, but the well had been there, and close beside her all the time. Our help is always far nearer than we think; alas! that we have not always either the opened eye or the trustful, taking hand!

¶ How wisely God has apportioned our cup! He does not give us all sweetness, lest we should rest satisfied with earth; nor all bitterness, lest we grow weary and disgusted with our lot. But He wisely mixes the two, so that if we drink the one, we must also taste the other. And perhaps a time is coming when we shall see that the proportions of this cup of human joy and sorrow are more equally adjusted than we now imagine—that souls capable of enjoyments above the vulgar crowd can also feel sorrow in comparison with which theirs is but like the passing April cloud in contrast with the long Egyptian night. How wise an ordination this is we cannot now discover. It will require the light which streams from the Eternal Throne to reveal to us the blessed

[1] J. D. Jones, *The Unfettered Word*, 23.

effects of having the sentence of death written on all our earthly enjoyments.[1]

¶ "When he had cast a tree into the waters, the waters were made sweet." It was a strange remedy. One would have thought it was a case for extraction, not addition. The burden of bitterness is a very heavy one. When it comes to us our first cry is, "Empty out the waters!" "No," says the Divine voice, "instead of emptying them, put something more in them!" And truly the Divine voice is right. What we need for our bitterness is not the *removal* of things, but the seeing of them in a new relation. The Psalmist speaks of a tree planted by rivers of water. A tree makes a great difference to our view of the water; it may change it from monotony into beauty; it adds a new fact to the old thing. So is it with my calamities; one added point of knowledge will chase them away. When the child is first going to school, it often sheds the waters of Marah. How will you cure these waters? By keeping him from school? God forbid! Show him the developed tree! Show him the fruit of knowledge! Show him that without school he will be a solitary man—mindless in a thinking world! The sight of the tree in the waters will make the waters sweet.[2]

I saw a cup sent down and come to her
  Brimful of loathing and of bitterness;
She drank with livid lips that seemed to stir
  The depth, not make it less:

But as she drank I spied a Hand distil
  New wine and virgin honey; making it
First bitter-sweet, then sweet indeed, until
  She tasted only sweet.[3]

¶ It was when he had become blind to the sights of this world that Milton saw, and sang, the splendours of God's Kingdom. And it was in the gloom of the prison that Bunyan beheld the wondrous meaning of the Christian pilgrimage, and caught glimpses of the Celestial City. One of our most successful medical missionaries in China resorted to the device of affixing texts of Scripture to the walls of the hospital wards, prepared with luminous paint, so that, when the darkness drew on, these sayings of God shone out in view of the wakeful sufferers, making vivid in the night-time

[1] *The Life of Catherine Booth*, i. 68.
[2] G. Matheson, *Leaves for Quiet Hours*, 108.
[3] Christina G. Rossetti.

what might have been overlooked by day. And so does God still inspire songs in the night season of our grief.[1]

2. But God does more than merely heal the bitter waters. He leads His pilgrims beyond them to other wells that are always sweet. When Marah is behind us, Elim is in front. The nearness of Elim to Marah is suggestive: only six miles separated the one from the other. Do not the sweetnesses and the bitternesses of life lie very near each other after all? Marahs are not the only experiences of the pilgrimage, though many a weary sufferer would have us believe that they are. Life has many Elims too; and it is often only a short day's journey from the misery to the joy.

Jacob found this true. He was one of the saddest-hearted of men, alone with his fears; but as he "went on his way, the angels of God met him." *David* found it true: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me," "my tears have been my meat day and night"—there he is at Marah, a weary desponding man—but very soon he comes to Elim: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." *Hezekiah* found it true: "Mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." Life is all Marah to him there. But as he goes on a little way, he can say, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul . . . cast all my sins behind thy back." "O Lord, by these (sorrowful) things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." He has reached Elim now. *Paul* too had his Marah, when his thrice-repeated prayer for a removal of the "thorn" brought no alleviation of his pain; but he soon came to an Elim where he could say, "Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities; for when I am weak, then am I strong." And is it not written for all the pilgrims of God, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth them for thirst"—sitting at a Marah bitter as death—"I the Lord will open the fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the dry land springs of water"? So they shall have their Elims too.

¶ I wonder if you were ever thirsty? Probably not. I never had been till I came to the Sudan. If you have been really

[1] T. F. Lockyer, *Seeking a Country*, 89.

thirsty, and often, you will be able to distinguish many varieties of the phenomenon. The sandstorm *thirst* I hardly count. It is caused by light soil forming in the gullet: wash the soil away and the thirst goes with it: this can be done with water, which you do not even need to swallow. The *desert thirst* is more legitimately so called: it arises from the grilling sun on the sand: this is not an unpleasant thirst: the sweat evaporates on your face in the wind of your own galloping, and thereby produces a grateful coolness without, while the throat and gullet are white-hot within. The desert thirst consists in this contrast: it can be satisfied by a gulp or two of really cool water which has also been evaporating through a canvas bottle slung on your saddle. But in so far as it can be satisfied it is no true Sudan thirst. The true *Sudan thirst* is insatiable. The true Sudan thirst which, to be sure, may be found in combination with either or both of the others, is born of sheer heat and sheer sweat. Till you have felt it, you have not thirsted. Every drop of liquid is wrung out of your body; you could swim in your clothes: but inside, your muscle shrinks to dry sponge, your bones to dry pith. All your strength, your substance, your self is draining out of you: you are conscious of a perpetual liquefaction and evaporation of good solid you. You must be wetted till you soften and swell to life again.[1]

¶ "And they came to Elim"; and I verily believe if they had not that day come to this pleasant and restful spot, with its twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm trees, the Israelites would never have reached Canaan at all, but would have ended their days as slaves in Egypt. If they had not come to Elim that day, there would have been an end to their journeyings; the Book of Exodus would have stopped short just here; there would have been no nation of Israel, and consequently no history of Israel to be written. For another experience like Marah, where they well-nigh died of thirst, another experience of burning sand and bitter water, would have taken the heart out of them—would have broken their spirit within them, and they would have abandoned their dream of Canaan in despair, and returned to the flesh-pots and thraldom of Egypt. Just in the nick of time, shall I say?—just in time to save them from surrender, apostasy, and despair—they came to Elim, where were twelve springs of water, and three score and ten palm trees. And by the springs and palm trees of Elim they not only refreshed their tired bodies, but they revived also their drooping courage and fainting souls.[2]

[1] G. W. Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartoum*, chap. xxv.
[2] J. D. Jones, *Elims of Life*, 171.

Elim, Elim! Through the sand and heat
I toil with heart uplifted, I toil with bleeding feet!
For Elim, Elim! at the last, I know
That I shall see the palm-trees, and hear the waters flow.

Elim, Elim! Grows not here a tree,
And all the springs are Marah, and bitter thirst to me;
But Elim, Elim! in thy shady glen
Are twelve sweet wells of water, and palms three-score and ten.

Elim, Elim! Though the way be long
Unmurmuring I shall journey, and lift my heart in song;
And Elim, Elim! all my song shall tell
Of rest beneath the palm-tree, and joy beside the well.[1]

II.

The Manna.

It is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.—Exod. xvi. 15.

1. The Israelites were now led farther away from all the associations of their accustomed life. From the waters and the palms of Elim they marched deeper into the recesses of the desert, haunted by fierce and hostile tribes such as presently hung upon their rear-guard and cut off their stragglers. Nor had they quite emerged from the shadow of their old oppressions, since Egyptian garrisons were scattered, though sparsely, through this district, in which gems and copper were obtained. Here, cut off from all natural modes of sustenance, the hearts of the people failed them. Most people, we may fear, would choose to live enslaved rather than to die free men. But there is a special meanness in their regret, since die they must, that they had not died satiated, like the firstborn whom God had slain: "Would that we had died by the hand of Jehovah in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

[1] William Canton.

2. The manna which miraculously supplied the wants of Israel was to them an utterly strange food, the use of which they had to learn. Thus it was another means of severing their habitual course of life and association of ideas from their degraded past. And while we may not press too far the assertion that it was the "corn of heaven" and "angels' food" (*i.e.*, "the bread of the mighty" — Ps. lxxviii. 24–25, R.V.), yet the narrative shows, even without help from later scriptures, that it was calculated to sustain their energies and yet to leave their appetites unstimulated and unpampered. For they were now called to purer joys than those of the senses—to liberty, a Divine vocation, the presence of God, the revelation of His law and the unfolding of His purposes.

¶ The manna of the Peninsula of Sinai is the sweet juice of the *tarfa*, a species of tamarisk. It exudes in summer by night from the trunk and branches, and forms small round white grains, which partly adhere to the twigs of the trees and partly drop to the ground; in the early morning it is of the consistency of wax, but the sun's rays soon melt it, and later in the day it disappears, being absorbed in the earth. A fresh supply appears each night during its season (June and July). The Arabs gather it in the early morning, boil it down, strain it through coarse stuff, and keep it in leather skins: they pour it like honey over their unleavened bread: its taste is agreeable, somewhat aromatic, and as sweet as honey. In a cool place it keeps for long: the monks of the Sinai monastery store samples of it, which they sell or give to travellers and pilgrims, as their predecessors did, thirteen centuries ago, to Antoninus. According to Ehrenberg it is produced by the puncture of an insect (now called *Gossyparia mannifera*). It softens in the heat of the hand, and consists almost entirely of sugar; so it cannot be "ground," or made into "cakes" (Num. xi. 8). It is not found in all parts of the Peninsula. It is found only after a rainy spring, and hence frequently fails altogether. The quantity yielded by the Peninsula in modern times is small—according to Burckhardt (in 1816), 500–600 pounds annually.[1]

Smooth and green are the pastures,
Rich is the meadow, and fair—
But oh! my Shepherd, my Shepherd,
Thou art not there.

[1] S. R. Driver.

Art Thou, then, in the desert
Where there are stones—not bread?
Is it there—not here—that with manna
Thy flock is fed?

There that, famishing, fainting,
Perishing for Thy Word
The sheep shall meet with their Shepherd,
And not on the pleasant sward?[1]

3. The great lesson taught by the gift of manna was that of dependence—"your heavenly Father careth for you." This message was to be spoken to them every day by the voice of the manna for forty years. There is always enough for gratitude, but never enough for greed. A daily supply for daily need. To-morrow must wait till it comes. God was teaching them to live *a day at a time*. He who rushed forth and began to scrape and pile, saying within himself, "I make hay before the sun shines, there is no telling what may happen to-morrow," found on the morrow that "it bred worms and stank." Every day's event was to lead them afresh to look up for the day's supply. So He taught them to pray—"Our Father who art in Heaven, give us this day our daily bread."

¶ So long as men live by bread, the far away valleys must laugh as they are covered with the gold of God, and the shouts of His happy multitude ring round the winepress and the well. No scene is continually and untiringly loved, but one rich by joyful human labour; smooth in field; fair in garden; full in orchard; trim, sweet, and frequent in homestead; ringing with voices of vivid existence. No air is sweet that is silent; it is only sweet when full of low currents of under sound—triplets of birds, and murmur and chirp of insects, and deep-toned words of men, and wayward trebles of childhood. As the art of life is learned, it will be found at last that all lovely things are also necessary;—the wild flower by the wayside, as well as the tended corn: and the wild birds and creatures of the forest, as well as the tended cattle; because man doth not live by bread only, but also by the desert manna; by every wondrous word and unknowable work of God.[2]

4. But in this lesson lay further disclosures of truth.

[1] Margaret Blaikie, *Songs by the Way*, 41.
[2] Ruskin, "*Unto this Last*," §§ 81, 82 (*Works*, xvii. 10).

(1) There is a tragic power in physical discomforts to destroy spiritual aspiration—or *the danger of penury* (Exod. xvi. 1–3). The people had set out from Egypt in a mighty enthusiasm to meet Jehovah and to learn His will, but within a few weeks the hardships of the wilderness had driven from their minds all longings but those for "a square meal." It is the old warfare between the senses and the soul—the old temptation to magnify the things seen at the expense of the things unseen, to imagine that the tangible has more real substance and is more satisfying than the spiritual. Bound for the mount of God, men long for the flesh-pots of Egypt. Perhaps the pathos of it all is even greater than the folly of it.

(2) Sufficiency is better than satiety—or *the danger of riches* (Exod. xvi. 4, 5). "A day's portion every day," and on the sixth day—*i.e.*, at a crisis—a double amount! A needed lesson in every land. It is hard for some men to avoid excess in their habits of life and exaggeration in their modes of thinking, and to accustom themselves to the idea of adequacy, of proportion, which means harmony, which means serene, abiding joy.

(3) As against the wear of penury and the waste of riches, the manna-gift teaches us the lesson of *the helpful discipline of daily needs*. As a wilderness product and emblem of its scanty fare, the manna stands for the hardship of the wilderness (Num. xi. 4 ff., xxi. 5). As such it may properly symbolize the bread which is eaten in the sweat of the brow in life's pilgrimage, the bread that stands for the struggle of life. Shall we hate this fare as the Israelites did, and let the struggle embitter us; or shall we look for a higher meaning in this struggle? For manna is also the symbol of God's chastening love, given to prove Israel and to do them good (Exod. xvi. 4; Deut. viii. 3, 16). And so the bread which stands for the struggle of life may also stand for its perfecting discipline. The sting of the struggle is then drawn; its bitterness is changed to blessing. But the manna is also "bread of heaven" (Neh. ix. 15) and as such a symbol of God's loving providence; so the bread of daily life may symbolize, not only a struggle to be endured, a discipline to be patiently acquiesced in, but a providence to be gratefully accepted and enjoyed. But, finally, the manna is transmuted into angels' food (Ps. lxxviii. 25); so the bread of daily life, symbol of

bitter struggle, of loving discipline, of kindly providence, is at length refined into an earnest of still higher gifts, and the manna, originally a symbol of the desert, becomes in the end a type of Christ Himself (John vi. 30 f.) and of the heavenly joys (Rev. ii. 17). Shall we not find Christ Himself and spiritual joy in the discipline of our daily life? In the thought of the manna-gift the grace at table should become one of the most beautiful of spiritual exercises, instead of, as it often is, one of the most meaningless of forms, and the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," expands into an all-inclusive prayer.

¶ I hope, friend, you and I are not too proud to ask for our daily bread, and to be grateful for getting it? Mr. Philip had to work for his, in care and trouble, like other children of men:—to work for it, and I hope to pray for it too. It is a thought to me awful and beautiful, that of the daily prayer, and of the myriads of fellow-men uttering it, in care and in sickness, in doubt and in poverty, in health and in wealth. "Panem nostrum da nobis hodie." Philip whispers it by the bedside where wife and child lie sleeping, and goes to his early labour with a stouter heart: as he creeps to his rest when the day's labour is over, and the quotidian bread is earned, and breathes his hushed thanks to the bountiful Giver of the meal. All over this world what an endless chorus is singing of love, and thanks, and prayer. Day tells to day the wondrous story, and night recounts it unto night. How do I come to think of a sunrise which I saw near twenty years ago on the Nile, when the river and sky, flushed with the dawning light and, as the luminary appeared, the boatman knelt on the rosy deck and adored Allah? So, as thy sun rises, friend, over the humble housetops round about your home, shall you wake many and many a day to duty and labour. May the task have been honestly done when the night comes; and the steward deal kindly with the labourer.[1]

[1] Thackeray, *Adventures of Philip*.

III.

Rephidim.

And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi.—Exod. xvii. 15.

On leaving the seashore the march had turned eastwards towards the great mass of mountains known generally as Sinai. The route is described as inexpressibly grand. On each side of the narrow pass rise peaks and precipices of every form and colour. Grey, red, brown, green, chalk-white, and raven-black are the hues of those entrance-gates of the most august temple of the world. Here, even before Abraham left Haran, the Egyptian Government had worked mines of copper and turquoise by convict labour.

Up to this point the sufferings of the pilgrim-host, though trying, had not been insupportable; but on leaving Dophkah and entering the Wady Feiran, the whole camp, man and beast, became severely pressed. The oases which had varied the monotony of the desert failed them; the granite walls on either hand reflected an intolerable glare and heat, and the failure of the supply of water threatened to drive the whole camp to frenzy. At Marah the water had been unpalatable; here there was no water at all. The brook which at times waters the valley was dry, as it often becomes still; and perhaps the presence of vegetation along the empty watercourse made the disappointment more tantalizing. The word Rephidim signifies "resting-places," and every one had been buoyed up during the stiff experiences of the last two days with the happy expectations which that name suggested. Obviously, therefore, the contrast between hope and reality was the more exasperating.

¶ If you essay to lead men, you will sooner or later come to a Rephidim. We are distinctly told that it was according to the commandment of the Lord that the children of Israel journeyed "by stages" (Exod. xvii. 1, R.V., *marg.*) from the wilderness of Sin, and pitched in Rephidim. The character of the worker is as dear to God as the work he is doing; and no pains must be spared by the Divine Artificer to complete the design to which He has set

His hand. Do not be surprised then, Christian worker, if you find yourself in Rephidim.[1]

1. Angrily the people turned upon Moses, not murmuring only, but even threatening his life. In answer to his prayer Moses is directed to take the elders of Israel, and go before the people: "Behold," said the Lord, "I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb." Here, as in the case of the manna, there was a special manifestation of the glory of God. All the people were gathered to see this great sight; nearer stood the elders of Israel. In front of these was the rock, high and massive—its rugged sides stretching up until its fretted heights stood out against the sky. Over all, dazzling and awful, was the glory of the Lord. Then Moses drew near and lifting the rod he smote the rock, and from it leapt the stream. As the Psalmist sings, "the waters ran down like rivers"—cool, delicious, abundant, it fell with happy music. And eagerly rushed the fevered children, and the thirsty men and women, and found new life in it; and from every side the flocks and herds gathered to share in the gracious supply.

¶ Looking back upon that scene St. Paul cries—"*that Rock was Christ.*" Good tidings for us pilgrims, going homeward. We are sometimes where Israel was—in the desert, parched, wearied, with faith weak, and ready to murmur, longing for a draught of the river of life, as David longed to drink of the crystal spring by Bethlehem. For us "there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." The scene seems to rise before John the seer as if this was but the pattern of that which in its fullest glory and complete significance must be seen in the mount. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."[2]

2. Israel had hitherto been the sheep of God: now they must become His warriors. At the Red Sea it was said to them, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord . . . the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exod. xiv. 13). But it is not so now. Just as the function of every true miracle is to lead to a state of faith in which miracles are not required; just as a mother reaches her hand to a tottering infant, that presently the boy may go alone; so the Lord fought for Israel,

[1] F. B. Meyer. [2] M. G. Pearse.

that Israel might learn to fight for the Lord. The herd of slaves who came out of Egypt could not be trusted to stand fast in battle; and what a defeat would have done with them we may judge by their outcries at the very sight of Pharaoh. But now they had experience of Divine succour, and had drawn the inspiring breath of freedom. And so it was reasonable to expect that some chosen men of them at least would be able to endure the shock of battle. And if so, it was a matter of the last importance to develop and render conscious the national spirit, a spirit so noble in its unselfish readiness to die, and in its scorn of such material ills as anguish and mutilation compared with baseness and dishonour, that the re-kindling of it in seasons of peril and conflict was more than half a compensation for the horrors of a battle-field.

3. The Amalekites were what we should call a nomad Bedouin tribe, who are spoken of as having their home in the desert south of Palestine: in the "Negeb," or "South," of Judah (Num. xiii. 29, xiv. 25, 43, 45), about Kadesh (Gen. xiv. 7), and in the same neighbourhood (1 Sam. xv. 7, xxvii. 8, xxx. 1). They correspond in fact very much to the Azazimeh tribe who now inhabit a large part of the elevated limestone plateau, called the *Tih*, between the mountains of the Sinaitic Peninsula and the Mediterranean Sea. Their appearance here in the Sinaitic Peninsula is not a substantial difficulty: as Dillmann remarks, "a branch of them may have been settled in or about the oasis in Wady Feiran; or they may in May or June have led their flocks up into the cooler and fresher pastures in the mountains, or they may even have made a raid against Israel from their homes on the Tih." Whichever supposition is the correct one, it was natural enough that the nomads, who lived on the scanty products of this region, should do their utmost to expel the intruders.

4. Few methods of winning a battle can have seemed more useless at first sight than the method adopted by Moses. Everything depended on the result of this first engagement. The undisciplined multitude had already begun to murmur because of the hardships of the way; a defeat would be certain to discourage them; therefore it might well have been expected that, however

much he might have entrusted the actual fighting to the younger Joshua, Moses would stand in the thick of his men to cheer them on by his presence and example to a victory on which depended, under God, all their hopes and all their great mission to the world. And yet it was in this supreme moment that Moses chose to retire, with two other leaders, to the top of the hill high above the battle, waiting with the rod of God in his hand. It might have been argued that this was not only inconsistent with his position as leader but absolutely useless, since, whatever he might do on the top of the mountain, the battle would be decided by force of arms in the plain below; and it might with some plausibility have been added that, since the Amalekites were on their own ground, in their own country, the prayers for success which they were doubtless offering had at least a good right to be heard. Nevertheless, the fact remains—"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."

5. When the conflict is over, Moses builds a memorial of thanksgiving to God, and piles together great stones—which, perhaps, still stand in some of the unexplored valleys of that weird desert land—to teach Israel the laws of conflict and the conditions of victory. These laws and conditions are implied in the name which he gave to the altar that he built—Jehovah-nissi, "the Lord is my Banner." Now, then, what do these stones, with their significant name, teach us, as they taught the ancient Israelites?

(1) *Let us realize for whose cause we fight.*—The banner was the symbol of the cause for which an army fought, or the cognizance of the king or commander whom it followed. So Moses, by that name given to the altar, would impress upon the minds of the cowardly mob that he had brought out of Egypt—and who now had looked into an enemy's eyes for the first time—the elevating and bracing thought that they were God's soldiers, and that the warfare which they waged was not for themselves, nor

for the conquest of the country for their own sake, nor for mere outward liberty, but that they were fighting that the will of God might prevail, and that He might be the King now of one land—a mere corner of the earth—and thereby might come to be the King of all the earth. That rude altar said to Israel: "Remember, when you go into the battle, that the battle is the Lord's, and that the standard under which you war is the God for whose cause you contend—none else and none less than Jehovah Himself. You are consecrated soldiers, set apart to fight for God."

(2) *Let us remember whose commands we follow.*—The banner in ancient warfare, even more than in modern, waved in front of the host, and determined the movements of the army. And so, by the stones that he piled and the name that he gave them, Moses taught Israel and us that they and we are under the command of God, and that it is the movements of His staff that are to be followed. Absolute obedience is the first duty of the Christian soldier, and absolute obedience means the entire suppression of one's own will, the holding of the equilibrium until He puts His finger on the side that He desires to dip and lets the other rise. They alone understand their place as Christ's servants and soldiers who have learned to hush their own will until they know their Captain's. In order to be blessed, to be strong, to be victorious, the indispensable condition is that our inmost desire shall be, "Not my will, but thine be done."

(3) *Let us recognize by whose power we conquer.*—The banner suggests to English people a false idea. It suggests the notion of a flag, or some bit of flexible drapery which fluttered and flapped in the wind; but the banner of old-world armies was a rigid pole, with some solid ornament of bright metal on the top, so as to catch the light. The banner-staff spoken of in the text links itself with the preceding incident. Moses stood on the mountain top with the rod in his hand. Now that rod was exactly a miniature banner, and when he lifted it victory came to Israel, and when it fell victory deserted their arms. So by the altar's name he would say, Do not suppose that it was Moses that won the battle, or that it was the rod that Moses carried in his hand that brought you strength. The true Victor was Jehovah, and it was He who was Moses' Banner. It was by Him that the lifted rod brought victory; as for Moses, he had nothing to do

with it; and the people had to look higher than the hill-top where he sat.

¶ "The Lord is my Banner"—no Moses, no outward symbol, no man or thing, but only He Himself. Therefore in all our duties, and in all our difficulties, and in all our conflicts, and for all our conquests, we are to look away from creatures, self, externals, and to look only to God. We are all too apt to trust in rods instead of in Him, in Moses instead of in Moses' Lord.[1]

God, who in Israel's bondage and bewailing
Heard them and granted them their heart's desire,
Clave them the deep with power and with prevailing,
Gloomed in the cloud and glowed into the fire,

Fed them with manna, furnished with a fountain,
Followed with waves the rising of the rod,
Drew them and drave, till Moses on the mountain
Died of the kisses of the lips of God.[2]

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

MOSES.

VIII.

The Ten Words.

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The Ten Words.

And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.—Exod. xxxiii. 11.

We have now reached the record of the greatest event in the life of Moses. It was much indeed that he should rise up from the midst of the splendours of Pharaoh's court, and step forth from that high position to become one with these poor enslaved and spirit-broken Israelites. It was much, very much, that he should be called of God, and commissioned to demand the release of Israel, and to bring them out from the house of their bondage. It was much that he should have stood and spoken to the waters of the Red Sea in the name of Jehovah, and have taken so great a part in Israel's deliverance and the overthrow of Egypt's hosts. It was much that he should have led so vast a multitude in the trackless wilderness. But, of all honours ever put upon man, this surely was the greatest—*the law was given by Moses.* If the supreme advantage of the Jew was that to him were committed the oracles of God, how great was his honour to whom it was given to climb the mount of God, to enter into the majesty of the Divine presence, and to receive from the Almighty those tables of the law which were to inspire and shape the religious life of the world.

1. Leaving Rephidim, the pilgrim-host, led by the cloud, travelled slowly along the Wady-es-Sheykh, which still forms the great highway of the desert, running due east and west, from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Suez, until they came on the plain *Er Râheh*, which means "the palm of the hand." It lies outspread from north to south two miles long and half a mile wide, nearly flat, and dotted over with tiny shrubs. On either side are mountains far higher than the loftiest mountain in Britain, composed of black and yellow granite, and at the end, blocking

the southern extremity of the plain, rises the sheer precipice of Sinai, 1200 to 1500 feet in height—the mount of God.

2. Every aspect of the scene demands our earnest and careful consideration.

(1) All the previous dealings of God with Israel have been a preparation for this. God did not begin with the commandments. He first made men free, and then He gave them the Law. The whole history is a striking illustration of St. Paul's words, "Being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." It is impossible for us to think of Israel beginning to keep these great commandments in Egypt. We need only recall their ignorance of God, and their utter misery. It is impossible to get faith when hope is dead. Workers in missions tell us that to create hope is the first and hardest thing—to stir men out of the awful apathy of a dulled and stupefied despair. Then we have to remember that their surroundings were full of heathenism, with its vice and degradation. The cruelty of the taskmasters would have found a new strength and bitterness if they had been provoked by the insult done to the gods of Egypt. The religion of Jehovah might live in such a condition, but it is very difficult to conceive of the Jewish religion *commencing* under such conditions.

(2) God desired to assure them of their unique relationship to Himself. They had already seen what He had done for them. He had given Ethiopia and Egypt for them, had borne them on eagles' wings, had fed them with manna, had smitten the flinty rocks for them, had delivered them from Amalek, and now He desired to assure them that, as the children of Abraham His Friend, they were peculiarly dear to Him. They were to be a peculiar treasure among all peoples, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

(3) God desired to enter into covenant with them, and to give them laws. Does it seem incredible that God, whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, should condescend to enter into a compact with sinful man? It may seem so, if we degrade humanity and account men as worms or atoms. But if we realize, apart from sin, the greatness of man—his moral worth, his likeness to God, his creative powers, his patience, his hope, his love—

then it will seem less wonderful that God should subordinate all else to the education of a being who is capable of eternal fellowship with Himself, and who is doubly bound to Him, first by original creation and then by the blood of the cross. How shall He not with Christ freely give us all things?

¶ God has rescued the people and brought them to Himself. Let them but obey His voice and keep His covenant, and three things are promised to them: (1) They shall be God's peculiar treasure; (2) they shall be a kingdom of priests; and (3) they shall be an holy nation. These three titles are all full of the future, prophetic types of what shall come after; and as such we find that they are constantly appealed to by later writers, as embodying the fundamental ideas of Israel's relation to God and position among the nations of the world. So, in an early discourse of Deuteronomy, a strong caution against the perils of idolatry is made to rest upon this thought: "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth."

Here I ask you to notice the appearance of another term—"chosen," or "elected"; for the two words are the same. The term has played a large part in the history of Christian thought, and profoundly influenced the destinies and fortunes of men in after ages. But it is here that we meet with it for the first time as a theological term, and used, be it noted, in what we may call a corporate sense, of the nation collectively in its historic aspect, and not of individuals. The idea that God had "chosen" or "elected" Israel is necessarily involved in the thought of Israel as God's own "peculiar people," or "peculiar treasure"; and so, adding the passage of Deuteronomy to the primary passage in Exodus, we get a group of four special phrases used of Israel in their new relation to God. They are—(1) God's peculiar treasure; (2) His chosen or elected ones; (3) a kingdom of priests; and (4) an holy nation. It is in these titles that the true conception of Israel's mission lies wrapped up, and we can never understand God's purpose as revealed in Scripture unless we study them carefully.[1]

3. How fitting was the place for so momentous an event. "They were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel en-

[1] E. C. S. Gibson, *The Old Testament in the New*, 35.

camped before the mount." The "mount" before which Israel encamped (Exod. xix. 2) was in all probability the northern peak (some 6900 feet above the sea) of the mass of granite mountains called Mount Sinai, or Musa Sufsafeh. This peak, Ras Sufsafeh, answers exactly to the requirements of the narrative, and has immediately to its north a plain of a square mile in extent, which commands a full view of the cliff. That such a plain should exist at all in front of such a cliff is so remarkable a coincidence with the sacred narrative that it furnishes a strong internal argument, not merely of its identity with the scene, but of the scene itself having been described by an eye-witness. The awful and lengthened approach, as to some natural sanctuary, would have been the fittest preparation for the coming scene. The plain itself is not broken and uneven and narrowly shut in, like almost all others in the range, but presents a long retiring sweep, against which the people could "remove and stand afar off." The cliff rising like a huge altar in front of the whole congregation, and visible against the sky in lonely grandeur from end to end of the whole plain, is the very image of "the mount that might be touched," and from which the "voice" of God might be heard far and wide over the stillness of the plain below, widened at that point to its utmost extent by the confluence of all the contiguous valleys.

¶ The very silence in those mountain stillnesses is oppressively eloquent—

> A silence as if God in heaven were still,
> And meditating some new wonder;

any breaking of that silence is not less eloquent, to remind man of his littleness before God. The loneliness of the region, the nakedness of the sheer granite walls, and a peculiar atmospheric condition, combine to give a prominence to the human voice which makes its very use a reverberating rebuke to the intruder who has ventured it. It is as though one were speaking in a vast glass bell, his voice ringing back to him from every side.[1]

¶ There was an idea of sanctity attached to rocky wilderness, because it had always been among hills that the Deity had manifested Himself most intimately to men, and to the hills that His saints had nearly always retired for meditation, for especial com-

[1] H. C. Trumbull, *Studies in Oriental Social Life*, 397.

munion with Him, and to prepare for death. Men acquainted with the history of Moses, alone at Horeb, or with Israel at Sinai, —of Elijah by the brook Cherith, and in the Horeb cave; of the deaths of Moses and Aaron on Hor and Nebo; of the preparation of Jephthah's daughter for her death among the Judæa mountains; of the continual retirement of Christ Himself to the mountains for prayer, His temptation in the desert of the Dead Sea, His sermon on the hills of Capernaum, His transfiguration on Mount Hermon, and His evening and morning walks over Olivet for the four or five days preceding His crucifixion,—were not likely to look with irreverent or unloving eyes upon the blue hills that girded their golden horizon, or drew down upon them the mysterious clouds out of the height of the darker heaven. But with this impression of their greater sanctity was involved also that of a peculiar terror. In all this—their haunting by the memories of prophets, the presences of angels, and the everlasting thoughts and words of the Redeemer—the mountain ranges seem separated from the active world, and only to be fitly approached by hearts which were condemnatory of it. Just in so much as it appeared necessary for the noblest men to retire to the hill-recesses before their missions could be accomplished, or their spirits perfected, in so far did the daily world seem by comparison to be pronounced profane and dangerous; and to those who loved that world, and its work, the mountains were thus voiceful with perpetual rebuke, and necessarily contemplated with a kind of pain and fear.[1]

4. In addition to the impressiveness of nature, solemn warnings and religious exercises helped to prepare the mind of Israel for the supreme crisis which was close at hand. The Divine voice, speaking through Moses, first impressed upon the elders of Israel the greatness of the national calling, its unique and supreme character. Israel had been chosen by the God of the whole earth to be His covenant people, His Church. "Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. xix. 3–6). A solemn purifica-

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, iii. chap. xiv. § 10 (*Works*, v. 254).

tion with washing of the body and the clothing for two days, according to the customs of primitive religion, was ordered; and "bounds" were set round the mountain (which its steep and isolated character rendered feasible); man or beast, on pain of death, was forbidden to pass beyond them. On the morning of the third day a terrible thunderstorm raged on the mountain, which was hidden in a thick black cloud. A trumpet-call summoned all the people to the base of the mount: "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount; and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount: and Moses went up" (Exod. xix. 18–20). Moses with Aaron ascended the mountain of terrors and mystery, and returning delivered to the people the great Ten Words, the charter of true religion, inculcating for ever true conceptions of God's character and His claims upon man.

¶ The scenic character of the description of Jehovah's descent upon Sinai and His converse with Moses finds a parallel in many rhetorical passages of the Psalms and Prophets, and is doubtless to be explained similarly. In these any signal event in which the hand of God is discerned is depicted as accompanied by disturbances in the elements and by convulsions of nature. In the light of such, it seems reasonable to regard the narratives recounting the delivery of the Law at Sinai as a dramatic picture, the details of which are not to be pressed. The Divine communications made to Moses were presumably internal rather than external; and were imparted through the avenues of reflexion and conscience rather than by the outward hearing. Yet it is not impossible that in the locality where the events are placed there may really have occurred natural phenomena which are reflected in the narrative. To the race and in the age to which Moses belonged, all that was startling or exceptional in nature unmistakably manifested Divine power; and lightning and tempest, in particular, were associated by the Hebrews with Jehovah's presence. Consequently the storms that occasionally burst round the top of Sinai may easily have impressed the spirit of the Israelite leader with a sense of God's nearness; whilst the thunder

may have been to him something more than a mere symbol of the Divine voice.[1]

¶ On August 12th, I left Tokyo by train and arrived in the evening at Karuizawa, where I had duties in connexion with a summer school which was being held for missionaries. On the night of my arrival, I lay down to sleep with my face near a window from which there was a good view of Mount Asama, an active volcano, eight thousand feet in height, and about ten miles away. Warning had been given by specialists that there were signs in the mountain of impending activity.

It can be easily imagined how startled the people were when, near midnight, there was a sharp earthquake and a terrible explosion. I was suddenly wakened, and on looking from my window witnessed a sublime spectacle, made all the more mysterious and awe-inspiring by having as its setting the background of night.

Like a mighty giant in struggle the great mountain was in agitation. A great black column of smoke, shot straight up into heaven, was unfolding and spreading at the top. The glow of fires could be seen at the mouth of the crater. At times, blue and fitful flames appeared and vanished at different points against the blackness and smoke. There was a thunderous noise in the crater, continuous for more than an hour, the sound of which was uncanny and terrible, far more so indeed than the roar of a hurricane at sea. Presently a storm-cloud formed and stood by the side of the column of volcanic smoke. Supposedly, it was produced by dynamic cooling of the air undergoing expansion in ascending from lower to higher levels in the atmosphere. At any rate, the storm cloud was there, and lightnings began to play on the face of the cloud and thunderings were heard from within. The roar of the volcano and the noise of thunder answered each other as deep calls unto deep. The grandeur of the scene was such as to defy description.

The spectacle called to mind certain words of Scripture. The next morning, I opened the Bible at Exodus (xix.) and was astonished to find there, as well as in Deuteronomy (iv., v.) and in Hebrews (xii.), language used descriptive of phenomena closely resembling those which I had witnessed. I read of "thunders and lightnings," of a "thick cloud upon the mount," of Mount Sinai "altogether on a smoke," of the "Lord descending upon it in fire," of the "smoke thereof ascending as the smoke of a furnace," and of the whole mount "quaking greatly" (Exod.). The account in Deuteronomy I found to be not less exact and particular.

[1] G. W. Wade, *Old Testament History*, 115.

"The mountain burned with fire unto the heart of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: but ye saw no form; only ye heard a voice" (iv. 11, R.V.). "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice" (v. 22). The language of Hebrews is certainly based on these accounts. "For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words." And also, "So fearful was the appearance that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake" (xii. 18–21). In fact the correspondence was so close as to include even the official regulations at Karuizawa, for I was told the next morning that the governor of the province had set bounds about the mount, in view of the increased activity of the volcano, though some had broken through and gazed upon the sight at their own peril.

Now two or three things were riveted upon my mind, when I read afresh the account of the giving of the Law. First, I was convinced that the language described volcanic as well as storm phenomena; secondly, I felt not less certain that the writer had witnessed the phenomena which he described; and thirdly, I was deeply impressed with the fitness of such a scene as the background of Divine legislation. All law is inseparable from the idea of force. The manifestation of God in the awful display of His power in earthquake, volcanic eruption, and storm would certainly give impressive emphasis to ordinances promulgated for the people.[1]

5. It was fitting that the proclamation of the Ten Words should be accompanied by such sanctions of outward solemnity as those which the religious history of Israel associated with Mount Sinai. The grandeur of the Moral Law was not yet a thing before which in itself the people could be expected to bow. The sentiment of reverence for the truths on which the moral order of the universe is constructed was, at least for the great bulk of them, a sentiment yet to be created. To them thunder and lightning, a mount whose red granite seemed on fire, and a voice speaking to them from out of the darkness, were grander and more awe-inspiring than the great unaccompanied imperative of duty. Before this imperative *we* may stand in awe, as before a fact

[1] S. H. Wainright, in *The Expository Times*, xxv. 90.

which all the thinking of men has never been able to explain away, a fact whose ultimate authority we all recognize when we say "I ought." But not yet they. We are not, therefore, to say that these things never happened so in their experience, simply because we would not require them to happen so in ours. We shall rather be thankful that to-day we confront the old words with a reverence which goes out to them immediately, and which discovers more grandeur in the simple word "duty" than in all the rolling of the thunder. And it will behove us to be careful that the edge be not again taken off this moral reverence, which has been so slowly and painfully acquired, by the false and lowered standards of materialism which in our time threaten both thought and life.

¶ Who can estimate what the world owes to these portents of Sinai, in the time when Israel was a child (Hos. xi. 1), and heaven lay about him in his infancy? We are so much occupied with that majestic law, "the rugged grandeur of which towers above the greatest monuments of Egypt, like Sinai itself above the pyramids," that we forget the intrinsic value of those awful manifestations which preceded its promulgation. But if we have the foundation of all ethics in the Decalogue, we have also, in the portents which preceded, the foundation of that reverence which is the soul of all true ethics, of those

> High instincts before which our mortal Nature
> Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised!

Our reverence for nature, and our reverence for the God of nature, are both of Hebrew origin; and Sinai is their birthplace. Alas! that there should be so much in these times so utterly at enmity with human joy as to encourage the attempt to abolish and destroy these, by cutting away their roots in that supernatural which is their only basis. But the God of Sinai still lives; and so long as He is acknowledged, reverence will still abide among men, in which, as Ruskin truly says, "is the chief joy and power of life."[1]

¶ Mount Sinai, for all these thousands of years, has been the commanding metaphor for conscience and the law of God. Geographically, the mountain stands like an iron peak, shot up by the desert from its masses of hard and pitiless red rock. Historically, it has been the platform from which the world has received its laws. Disraeli introduces it into his *Tancred* as the mount of

[1] J. Monro Gibson, *The Mosaic Era*, 83.

moral vision for the dreamer who is his hero. Bunyan's Pilgrim has it thrust upon his path, precipitous and overhanging, threatening him with its crushing rocks and its deadly flashes of fire. His burden, too, becomes heavier as he goes, but the reason for that seems to be that he is out of the way. Here Evangelist again appears upon the scene. He comes to meet him, drawing nearer and nearer. His coming is deliberate, for he has been watching the man growing worldly in his own pitiful fashion. The question is asked, "What doest thou here?"—the very question which Elijah heard on the road to the same mountain. But here, in a later edition [of the *Pilgrim's Progress*], the word "Christian" is added, evidently for emphasis. A Christian should never be cowering under Mount Sinai.[1]

¶ The Maker's Laws, whether they are promulgated in Sinai Thunder, to the ear or imagination, or quite otherwise promulgated, are the laws of God; transcendent, everlasting, imperatively demanding obedience from all men. This, without any thunder, or with never so much thunder, thou, if there be any soul left in thee, canst know of a truth. The Universe, I say, is made by Law; the great Soul of the World is just and not unjust. Look thou, if thou have eyes or soul left, into this great shoreless Incomprehensible: in the heart of its tumultuous Appearances, Embroilments, and mad Time-vortexes, is there not, silent, eternal, an All-just, an All-beautiful; sole Reality and ultimate controlling Power of the whole? This is not a figure of speech: this is a fact.[2]

I.

Their Antiquity.

1. We may confidently believe that in the Decalogue we have an original monument of Mosaism. It is indisputable that the Ten Words are an index to the character of Moses' work in so far as they place morality in the forefront of Israel's religion, and form a commentary on the meaning of the "holiness" ascribed to the God of redemption. We seem to be justified in adhering to the traditional view of the Decalogue chiefly on the ground that it is intrinsically credible. It is consistent with all that we know of Israel's subsequent history, and it would be impossible to

[1] John Kelman, *The Road*, i. 33.
[2] Carlyle, *Past and Present*.

explain satisfactorily the vitality and vigour displayed in the conquest of Canaan without the supposition that the long observance of some primary laws of moral conduct had moulded the character of the nation and consolidated its strength.

¶ Much as critics have denied, there have been found very few who deny that in the main some such law as this must have been given to Israel in Moses' day. Even Kuenen admits as much as that in his *History of the Religion of Israel.* The only commandment of the ten he has difficulty in accepting is the second, which forbids the making of any graven image for worship. That, he thinks, cannot have been in the original Decalogue, not because of any peculiarity of language, or because of any incoherency in composition, but simply because he cannot believe that at that early date the religion of Yahweh could have been so spiritual as to demand the prohibition of images.[1]

2. It is scarcely conceivable that the prophets were the first ethical teachers of Israel. It has been justly pointed out that "the more the pre-prophetic religion is depreciated, the more difficult it will be to account for its sudden rise to the level in which we find it in the earliest writing prophets." The prophets never claim the position of pioneers in religion; they regard themselves as restorers of a moral and religious ideal which had been set before the nation at the very outset of its history. Their language implies that Mosaism was pre-eminently an ethical religion; that, in fact, it had laid the foundations of Israel's polity in a lofty conception of God, and in the exaltation of righteousness as the essential element in true and acceptable worship. Certainly this view harmonizes with the fact that the Old Testament uniformly ascribes to Moses a prophetic character.

¶ On any reading of the commandments only the third and fourth (two out of ten) refer to matters of mere worship; and even these may more correctly be taken to refer primarily to the moral aspects of the cultus. All the rest deal with fundamental relations to God and man. Consequently the prophets who, after the manner of Amos and Hosea, denounce the prevailing belief that Yahweh's help could be secured for Israel, whatever its moral state, by offerings and sacrifices, were not teaching a new doctrine, first discovered by themselves. They were simply reasserting the fundamental principles of the Mosaic religion. Reverence and

[1] A. Harper, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 61.

righteousness—these from the first were the twin pillars upon which it rested.[1]

¶ The Decalogue is a mirror and brief summary of all virtues, and teaches how we should conduct ourselves towards God and towards man. And no more beautiful, perfect, and shorter book of virtues was ever written. . . .

The law is a light which enlightens us, not to see God's grace or righteousness, through which we attain to eternal life; but to see sin, our infirmities, death, God's anger, and judgment. The gospel is a far different light. It lights up the troubled heart, makes it live again, comforts and helps. For it shows how God forgives unworthy, condemned sinners for Christ's sake, when they believe that they are redeemed by His death; and that through His victory are given to them all blessings, grace, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life.[2]

II.

Their Form.

1. It is generally thought that the Commandments were originally received and written down in a much shorter form than that in which (with some variation) they appear in Exod. xx. and Deut. v.—perhaps something as follows:—

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me (or besides) me.
2. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain.
4. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day.
5. Honour thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt do no murder.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

The *first* word enforces the *unity* of God, as against the ethnic ideas of merely local, limited, or competing divinities (*Elohim*). The *second* teaches the spirituality of God, and so condemns idolatry. God is not to be localized or materialized in man's

[1] Andrew Harper, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 75.
[2] Luther, *Table-Talk* (ed. Förstemann), ii. 94.

thought. The *third* asserts the holiness of God, and the supreme claim which His revelation of Himself has upon man's reverence. The *fourth*, re-emphasizing a primeval institution, proclaims God's right to the consecration of man's time, his labour, and his rest. The remaining six deal more directly with man, with the consecration of the national and individual life to Jehovah. The *fifth* and *seventh* enjoin the sacredness of family life and its relationships; the *sixth*, the sanctity of the individual life; the *eighth*, of property; the *ninth*, of reputation; while the *tenth* deals not only with acts of oppression and injustice, but also with the motive that might prompt them. Throughout the series the great principle is seen that morality is founded on truth respecting God; and the fundamental error of the heathen world is refuted, which divorced religion from morals, and thought the former was to be satisfied by the due performance of rites and sacrifices. The law of Sinai is rightly summed up both in the Old and in the New Testament by the two great commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18).

¶ "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." If man had been able to keep this one commandment perfectly the other nine would never have been written; instead he has comprehensively disregarded it, and perhaps never more than now in the twentieth century. Ah, well! this world, in spite of all its sinning, is still the Garden of Eden where the Lord walked with man, not in the cool of evening, but in the heat and stress of the immediate working day. There is no angel now with flaming sword to keep the way of the Tree of Life, but tapers alight morning by morning in the Hostel of God to point us to it; and we, who are as gods knowing good and evil, partake of that fruit "whereof whoso eateth shall never die"; the greatest gift or the most awful penalty—Eternal Life.[1]

2. It has been thought by some that, since there were two stone tables of the Divine inscription, the ten commandments were equally divided between them, five on each. If this were so, the law about our honouring our parents would be on the same level with the four that refer to God, and this might be justified by the reflection that in honouring them we really honour Him,

[1] Michael Fairless, *The Roadmender*, 52.

in whom every family in heaven and earth is named. But on the whole the old division into four and six is better, the first regarding our duty to God, and the second our duty to man.

¶ The Ten Words can be counted up in more ways than one. What the Jews have for many years regarded as the First Word, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," is unlike all the other Words in being an assertion, not a prohibition or a command. It is true that the Ten Commandments are not called in the Bible *Mitzvot*, commands; but *Debarim*, words. Still, our First Word sounds very like an introduction to what follows. Many people therefore suppose that what we call the Second Commandment includes two commands in one, and comprises really both the First and Second Commandments. In that case the First Commandment would forbid the worship of any other god except the one and only true God; the Second Commandment would forbid the making of any material emblem or symbol of the one true God, or the making of any idol or image of any created thing for the purpose of worship. We have no clue from the Bible as to which way of counting the Words is the right way. The earliest authorities we have (who are two Jews, called Philo and Josephus) reckon the Words the second way, and they are counted so to the present day.[1]

3. Duty to God stands first, and lays the needful foundation for the right discharge of our duties to man. The love of God is the foundation of all love to our fellows. Neglect the duties of piety, and you will soon neglect your duties to your neighbour. The Scripture does not ignore the distinction between religion, *i.e.*, the duties we owe to God, and morality, *i.e.*, the duties implicated through earthly relationships, but it unites the two in the deeper idea that all duty must be done to God, who is above all, through all, and in all. The precepts of the first table enjoin that God be honoured in His being, worship, name, and day. The precepts of the second follow naturally, requiring that he who loves God should love his brother also, who is made in the image of God; and surely that love implies that he will refrain from injuring him in deed, in word, and in thought—in his person, his wife, his property, or his reputation.

¶ Mr. Herbert Spencer maintains that the ghost theory, originally suggested by dreams of the dead, is the origin of all

[1] C. G. Montefiore, *The Bible for Home Reading*, i. 92.

belief in God. If so, how extraordinary it is, that in the most coherent and strictly developed of all ancient religions there is hardly a vestige of this ghost theory,—Saul's vision of Samuel in the witch of Endor's house is the only one I can at present recollect,—while nevertheless the enunciation of an authoritative moral law, far in advance of the intellectual stage of culture which would appear to correspond to it, takes place in the very nursery of the race, and in the very centre of its first great scene of trial! Is it conceivable to any one that the ghost of a great ancestor could have originated the Decalogue? Whence did these severe restraining precepts come, if they did not come from a real power above man? To one who assumes the view of the purely physical origin of man, how should so early an outbreak of what would, on that hypothesis, be the pure superstition of a spiritual and rigidly restraining power, be accounted for? . . . It seems to me perfectly certain that the early incorporation of such a law as the Decalogue in human history is an incontrovertible proof, first, that physical law is not the root of human character, but moral law; and next, that the moral law was revealed to us, and in us, long before the intellect had begun to stride forward with anything like its full power; in other words, that, instead of being the mere fruit borne by that power, it was the ultimate guide and ruler and director of that advancing intelligence which now claims to be its master.[1]

III.

Their Uniqueness.

1. The Decalogue is a concise but comprehensive summary of the fundamental duties of an Israelite towards God and his neighbour. Jehovah is to be the only God recognized by Israel; He is to be worshipped under no material form; His name is to be reverenced; and the "Sabbath" is weekly to be kept holy in His honour. Respect is to be paid to parents; murder, adultery, theft, and false witness—the commonest, perhaps, of the graver offences, especially in a society in which the hand of the law is not strong—are forbidden; the Israelite is not even to entertain the desire to possess anything of a neighbour's. Within a brief compass, the Decalogue thus lays down the fundamental articles of religion (sovereignty and spirituality of God), and asserts the

[1] R. H. Hutton, *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, 108.

claims of morality in the chief spheres of human relationship (home, calling, society). By a few salient and far-reaching precepts, pointedly expressed and easily remembered, it covers the whole religious and moral life; and provides a summary of human duty, capable of ready expansion and adjustment even to the highest Christian standards, and unsurpassable as a practical rule of life. The Decalogue, moreover, brings morality into intimate connexion with religion; and, in an age when popular religion was only too readily satisfied with a formal ceremonialism, it emphasized, not ritual, but spirituality, reverence, and respect for the rights of other men (cf. Rom. xiii. 9), as what was pleasing in God's sight, and demanded by Him.

2. The potential value of the two tables is in their union. Herein lies the absolute uniqueness of the Decalogue. It accomplished what no other code of antiquity accomplished—the indissoluble union of religion and morals. Religion without morals disintegrates into the rottenness of superstition, full of maggots and all uncleanness. Morals without religion lack the power of life and petrify into legality. A worm-eaten log or a petrified stump is a sad contrast to the living, fruitful tree.

¶ Moral rules, apprehended as ideas first, and then rigorously followed as laws, are, and must be, for the sage only. The mass of mankind have neither force of intellect enough to apprehend them clearly as ideas, nor force of character enough to follow them strictly as laws. The mass of mankind can be carried along a course full of hardship for the natural man, can be borne over the thousand impediments of the narrow way, only by the tide of a joyful and bounding emotion. The noblest souls of whatever creed, the pagan Empedocles as well as the Christian Paul, have insisted on the necessity of an inspiration, a joyful emotion, to make moral action perfect. An obscure indication of this necessity is the one drop of truth in the ocean of verbiage with which the controversy on justification by faith has flooded the world. But, for the ordinary man, this sense of labour and sorrow constitutes an absolute disqualification; it paralyses him; under the weight of it, he cannot make way towards the goal at all. The paramount virtue of religion is, that it has lighted up morality; that it has supplied the emotion and inspiration needful for carrying the sage along the narrow way perfectly, for carrying the ordinary man along it at all. Even the religions with most dross in them have

had something of this virtue; but the Christian religion manifests it with unexampled splendour.[1]

IV.

Their Permanence.

1. The Ten Commandments form but a very small part of the Law; but they are the part which concerns us far the most. The other precepts are rules for the guidance of a particular people at a particular time. After a while many of them seem to have dropped into disuse: the people, in fact, outgrew them; they lost their original use, and became a mere burden too heavy to bear. But at first they were needed. When a people is in a young, unformed state, above all when it is so disorderly and wilful as the children of Israel were in those days, nothing could serve but stiff rules to be obeyed, going even into the lesser matters of life. The laws given by Moses were chiefly intended to enforce just and merciful dealings among themselves, to keep them separate, as a people set apart to God, from the idol-worshipping and foully immoral nations around them, and in a great many different ways to lay down rules for the outward service of God. The people were not to invent for themselves ways of doing Him homage which they should be apt to regard as bribes to His majesty. They had simply to do as they were bid, to offer to Him just what He commanded to be offered. But it was in offerings that their worship was chiefly to consist. Public prayer, such as makes up the greater part of our worship, was as yet unknown. They approached God through sacrifice. To yield up to Him a portion of the good things He had given them, to acknowledge in this practical way that they owed all to Him—this was the natural religious service of men who as yet had far more to do with acts than with words; and the *spirit* of that service remains the very Christian spirit. When we never tire of calling upon God to give, while we grudge every self-denial on our part for His sake, we are making no advance on the religion of those ancient Jews, we are but moving away from all true religion of any kind.

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism.*

¶ Has the first voice of Sinai ever lost its cosmopolitan ring? Have its commands ever become merely national? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"—is that national; is it not the voice to humanity? "Thou shalt not make any graven image"—is that national; is it not the ignoring of all physical limits? "Honour thy father and thy mother"—is that national; are not the ties of family universal? "Thou shalt not kill"—is that national; is not life everywhere dear? "Thou shalt not steal"—is that national; are not possessions everywhere precious? "Thou shalt not bear false witness"—is that national; have not all lands sought the secret of truth? Even the command to keep a day of rest, seemingly the most local of all the Decalogue precepts, is based upon no national observance—no Jewish holiday, no patriotic anniversary, no commemoration of a people's triumph. It is based upon the fact of creation, on the constitution of Nature itself, on that design of the world which makes all things one, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy, for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth." Such universalism is grand—in the old world it is unique. It can belong only to a race which has in it the consciousness and the conscience of humanity—a race which feels within its veins not merely its native blood, but the blood of all ages and the heart of all climes. Such a race had a *right* to its Messianic aspirations.[1]

2. The Mosaic laws have become the starting-point of all religious systems and of all true civilization, and only from their promulgation dates the diffusion of a genuine monotheism, a purely internal morality and a sound enlightenment. They form a decisive epoch in the history of the human race, and are, therefore, perhaps the greatest and most important event in universal history. In a simple and condensed, yet extremely emphatic, form, equally impressive for every degree and manner of intellectual culture, a complete system of duties is comprised, which man owes to his Creator and his fellow-men; and so comprehensive is the purport of these words that already from the earliest times the whole sum of the Divine precepts has been considered to be included in them as in an embryo, so that all the other laws are to be regarded only as the development or detailed elaboration of these words, wherefore they are by Hebrew tradition justly called the "fundamentals of faith."

[1] G. Matheson, *The Representative Men of the Bible*, i. 214.

While the law on stone is written,
  Stone-like is the mighty word;
We with chilling awe are smitten,
  Though the word is Thine, O Lord.
Firm it is as mountains old,
As their snowy summits cold.

Stone-like, too, on each offender
  Broken laws may heavy fall,
And with crushing vengeance render
  One a terror unto all:
Struck themselves, in enmity,
Ireful sparks may from them fly.

Lord, Thou hast the law re-written,
  Where we may untrembling read;
We with tender awe are smitten,
  As we see the Saviour bleed,—
Bleed in His obedient love,
Hope and zeal in us to move.

From His heart the law is shining,
  Heart-like is its every word;
We who in the cold were pining,
  Of the sunny warmth have heard:
From the rocks we feared would crush
At His touch sweet waters gush.

Honoured be the name of Jesus,
  Who for us obedient stood;
Faith in Him from fear will ease us,
  Love to Him will make us good:
When the law in love is shown,
Hearts we have instead of stone.[1]

[1] T. T. Lynch, *The Rivulet.*

MOSES.

IX.

The Covenant and the Tabernacle.

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The Covenant and the Tabernacle.

Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people. —Ps. cvi. 4.

Closely associated with the Ten Words, there follows immediately in Exod. xx., xxii.–xxiii. a series of enactments and injunctions described as "the Book of the Covenant."

I.

The Covenant.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.—Exod. xxxiv. 27.

1. The Book of the Covenant seems to be in a sense the foundation of the polity of Israel, the laws in it dealing with (1) religious worship, (2) persons, (3) property.

(1) Sacrifices are assumed to be so natural a part of the religion of the Hebrews that it is not necessary to enjoin the practice of offering them. They are divided into two classes, burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. The Israelites are instructed to make their altars of earth or of unhewn stones, and without steps (Exod. xx. 24–26). No special place is set apart for sacrifices, but a promise is given by Jehovah: "In every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee" (xx. 24). Jehovah claims as His right the firstborn son, the firstborn of all cattle (xxii. 29, 30), the seventh day (xxiii. 12), and the seventh year (xxiii. 11). The Sabbath is to be kept as a day of rest, "that thine ox and thine ass may have rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed" (xxiii. 12). Only three feasts are mentioned, at which all males are ordered to appear before Jehovah: that of Unleavened Bread,

in memory of Israel's coming forth from Egypt in the month of Abib; the feast of Harvest, "the firstfruits of thy labours"; and the feast of Ingathering (xxiii. 14–17). Three precepts are added: (1) No leavened bread may be used in sacrifices (xxiii. 18); (2) firstfruits are to be brought to the house of Jehovah (xxiii. 19); (3) "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk" (xxiii. 19). The Israelites are warned: "Ye shall be holy men unto me"; and in token of this they must scrupulously abstain from animals killed by wild beasts (xxii. 31). Such are the simple directions for religious observance in the earliest code of ancient Israel's "Sermon on the Mount." They are conspicuous alike for plainness and simplicity and for a complete absence of insistence on any elaboration of ceremonial.

(2) The laws affecting persons recognize as necessary institutions both slavery and polygamy, as well as the duty of exacting personal vengeance for injuries, but precautions are taken to modify any undue severity in their operation. The slave is acknowledged to be his owner's "money," yet he is by no means without rights. He may be beaten; but, if during chastisement he loses an eye or even a tooth, he is to be set free (xxi. 26, 27). If a master kills a slave he is liable to punishment, though the loss of a man's services is deemed a sufficient penalty, if the death should take place some days after the blow that caused it (xxi. 20, 21). No Hebrew might be kept as a slave for more than six years, except of his own free will. If, however, his master had given him a wife during the period of servitude, he could retain her only by consenting to continue in bondage for life. In this case the master had to place the slave against the door or doorpost of his house, and, in the presence of the judges, bore his ear through with an awl (xxi. 1–6). The honour of female slaves was scrupulously guarded; under no circumstances might a Hebrew woman be sold to a foreigner (xxi. 7–11).

(3) The laws of property suppose the people to be settled in their own land, and relate mainly to injuries done to cattle, or to crops (xxi. 28–xxii. 15). Thieves were to be punished by a fine of double the value of the stolen goods (xxii. 4). It is not certain whether disputes concerning property were to be submitted to the judges or to be decided by an appeal to God, as the word *Elohim* is used in both senses (xxii. 8). It was forbidden to lend

money to the poor on interest, and the garment taken as a pledge had to be restored at nightfall.

¶ The most instructive feature of the code is its insistence on mercy and humanity towards the stranger and the helpless; and the meting out of even justice to rich and poor alike:—"Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry."[1]

2. All these words were first delivered orally by Moses to the people, and accepted by them, and then written down. The next day a remarkable ceremony followed—the ratification of this "covenant" between God and His people by the blood of sacrifice and by a sacrificial banquet in God's immediate presence. An altar was erected at the base of the mountain, and twelve pillars to represent the twelve tribes. Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings (evidently existing institutions of the earlier worship) were offered at Moses' command by chosen young men.

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, and seventy of the elders of Israel, were now summoned to ascend the mount of terrors. A vision of God Himself was vouchsafed to them; no similitude is described; but the framework of what they saw was the beauty of an unclouded heaven, a vivid contrast to the darkness and the fire which had gone before: "there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness." They ate and drank on the mount, evidently of the sacrificial banquet which concluded the peace-offering, according to ancient custom, and God "laid not his hand upon them." Instead of the fear and peril which had overawed them at the giving of the Covenant, they recognized the mercy and forbearance of God. God and man were reconciled. Moses and his servant Joshua were a second time summoned away from the rest, Aaron and Hur being left in charge of the people. The cloud again covered the mountain, and for forty days the lawgiver was alone on the height, shrouded in mystery, and receiving further revelations from the God of Israel.

3. By the conditions of the Covenant which Jehovah purposed to make between Himself and the ransomed people, and which

[1] A. R. Whitham, *Old Testament History*, 92.

were communicated to them by Moses, they were taught the real meaning and object of their deliverance from Egypt; at the same time there dawned upon them a new and worthier conception of the God of their fathers. The experience of the Exodus had taught them that Jehovah was an incomparable Being, unique among gods (Exod. xv. 11). The redemption of an enslaved race from the bondage of Egypt had manifested both His grace and His holiness; His pity for the oppressed, and His unapproachable majesty. But at Sinai Israel learned the further lesson that this God of grace and power was also a Being who delighted in justice and humanity, a defender of the cause of the poor and helpless, the chastiser of falsity, cruelty, and oppression. There were doubtless many elements of imperfection in Israel's idea of Jehovah. He was popularly conceived as Israel's tribal Deity, marching with His people to battle against their enemies, more powerful indeed than the deities of the heathen, but having stern attributes akin in some respects to theirs. But the arm of Jehovah had, as it were, been laid bare in the marvels of the Exodus, and the legislation of Sinai formed the foundation of higher and purer moral ideas, which the great prophets of later ages expanded and developed. Thus the revelation of God's essential character and requirement was progressive, and it is the teaching of the gospel that finally crowns and completes the gradual disclosure of the Old Testament.

(1) The natural thought of God is precisely that which first met Israel at Sinai. The symbols that set Him forth are lightnings, thunders, fire. The very thought of God is a terror; His presence is a torment. But lo, God speaks. They who come nearest and listen discern in the words of His law an order, a rightness; he that hath ears to hear perceives running through the commandments the presence of One who comes down to gird life with security, and to crown it with blessedness. There is a care which bends over the man and his family and all belonging to him, making them sacred. The Almighty sets Himself for the protection of the weak, and for the maintenance of the right against the wrong-doer everywhere. That is the beginning of the vision of God. He is no arbitrary Sovereign sitting on the throne of the universe, demanding obedience to His own will under threat of pains and penalties. He saith, "Come now, and let us

reason together." He deals with us as those whose confidence must be won. The law cannot show us God, but the law can and does show us the righteousness and beneficence and wisdom of God. The law cannot show us God, but without the law we cannot know God. "God spake unto the people": that was the beginning of the vision. It always is. God reveals Himself to us first of all in His Word. We must hear His voice, or we cannot so much as lift up our eyes unto heaven. He must speak to us that we may learn to speak to Him. He who does not hear God cannot see Him: to hear aright is to begin to see.

(2) The next step was the surrender of themselves to the will of God. "And Moses took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." There must be a deep earnest purpose of obedience; the will must be set on God's side before the vision can be ours.

¶ The ideal of a covenanted nation was the heart of the Hebrew religion and the life-blood of Hebrew history. The Hebrews had the unalterable conviction that God had entered into a covenant with their race, and that they had solemnly bound themselves to be His people and to serve Him. The covenant ideal was at once the consecration and the inspiration of the people. There was the spirit of duty and service and self-surrender in it; there was the spirit of power and freedom and invincibility in it.[1]

¶ Later on, when the way of perfection was opened out before me, I realized that in order to become a Saint one must suffer much, always seek the most perfect path, and forget oneself. I also understood that there are many degrees of holiness, that each soul is free to respond to the calls of Our Lord, to do much or little for His love—in a word, to choose amongst the sacrifices He asks. And then also, as in the days of my childhood, I cried out: "My God, I choose everything, I will not be a Saint by halves, I am not afraid of suffering for Thee, I only fear one thing, and that is to do my own will. Accept the offering of my will, for I choose all that Thou willest."[2]

(3) And this is not all. There is the building of the altar. Around it are set twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then the sacrifices are brought to the altar and slain

[1] J. Strachan, *Hebrew Ideals*, i. 103.
[2] *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, 25.

upon it, and half the blood is sprinkled on the altar, and half the blood is sprinkled on the people. That is the next step. There is need for us to consider it carefully. We can scarcely fail to hear the word of God; we all have something of that gracious prompting of the Holy Spirit which shapes itself in a purpose of obedience. But we may stop short of the altar and the sacrifice.

¶ The law of cost runs through the universe. It is true alike of the activities of God and of the processes of inanimate nature, that the price of fruitfulness is sacrifice. Arthur Jackson paid the price, and when his work seemed over it was, in reality, but beginning. "Things can never be the same as if Arthur Jackson had not so freely laid down his life. His time of work in Moukden was long enough to impress many with his nobility of character and his great professional ability, but it is by his death that he will be remembered. His death, for the Chinese people, has made a most profound impression." So wrote the man under whom he served at Moukden.[1]

The wealth of earth, of sky, of sea,
The gold, the silver, sparkling gem,
The waving corn, the bending tree,
Are Thine; to us Thou lendest them.

To Thee, as early morning's dew,
Our incense, alms, and prayer shall rise;
As rose, when joyous earth was new,
Faith's patriarchal sacrifice.

And when Thine Israel, travel-sore,
With offerings to Thy courts would come,
With free and willing hearts they bore
Gifts, even from their desert home.

We, Lord, would lay at Thy behest
The costliest offerings on Thy shrine;
But when we give, and give our best,
We only give Thee what is Thine.[2]

[1] *Life of Dr. Arthur Jackson of Manchuria*, 144.
[2] E. A. Dayman.

II.

The Tabernacle.

See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was shewed thee in the mount.—Heb. viii. 5.

1. In the course of the forty days' seclusion on the mountain, Moses is said to have received from God exact instructions for making a tabernacle, or portable sanctuary, with its various furniture for sacred purposes, and for the consecration of a permanent priesthood in Aaron and his family. This account, contained in Exod. xxv.–xxxi., is derived from another source than that of the previous events at Sinai, from a narrative embodying the ancient traditions of the *priests* of Israel. An ordered and pure and beautiful worship is certainly not unworthy to be one of the matters directly revealed by God, and the record of it would naturally be preserved by those who were most closely associated with it. There are traces in it of correspondences with the worships of other ancient nations, *e.g.*, the Egyptians. This again is not unnatural, for it seems to be the method of Divine revelation to use and build upon pre-existing customs and ideas, while purifying and giving new meanings to them.

2. The plan of the tabernacle is stated to be in accordance with a Divine "pattern" shown to Moses in the mount (Exod. xxv. 9). It was to be the material embodiment of an idea or purpose in the mind of God. And this is confirmed by the extraordinary way in which the tabernacle and the various arrangements for worship were seen in later times to be symbolical of the Incarnation and the Church. This correspondence is especially drawn out in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Just as the Covenant of Sinai was preparatory to the New Covenant ratified in the blood of the Redeemer, so the tabernacle was to be an anticipation of a permanent union of God with man. Its purpose is definitely stated in Exod. xxv. 8: "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

3. The tabernacle was designed on the model of a temple, that is to say, there was a large outer enclosure, in the midst of which

was the shrine with the altar of burnt sacrifice standing before it. The shrine was constructed of boards of acacia covered by tent-curtains and carpets, and was divided into two parts called the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In the inner sanctuary was the Ark of the Covenant, the most sacred possession of the nation, containing the Tables of the Testimony. Above the Ark was the Mercy-Seat, on each side of which were two winged figures or cherubim. The inner sanctuary was separated from the outer by a veil. Before the veil, in the Holy Place, stood the Altar of Incense, and the Table, on which was placed "bread of the faces" or shewbread, while the seven-branched candlestick stood on the south side of the Holy Place, facing the table of shewbread. The arrangements were such that the whole sanctuary could be transported without any difficulty, and at the same time it was well suited to a simple but orderly worship.

4. Many students of the Old Testament have come to the conclusion that the description of the tabernacle in the Book of Exodus is very highly idealized. There is no sufficient ground for questioning the existence of a simple tent in the earliest Mosaic period, which formed a shelter for the ark, and stood without the camp in accordance with ordinary Semitic usage. But what is called in question by criticism is the existence in the wilderness, among tribes living under nomad conditions, of a splendid, costly and elaborate structure, "wrought in the most advanced style of oriental art." Apart from the character of the building there is the serious difficulty that Hebrew tradition appears to know practically nothing of such a shrine in pre-exilic days. It knows something of the ark and of a central sanctuary at Shiloh, but of the sumptuous tabernacle described in the Book of Exodus it makes no mention. A Christian apologist can afford to admit that the elaborate description of the tabernacle is to be regarded as a product of religious idealism, working upon a historical basis, and that the sketch as a whole is largely coloured by reminiscences or traditions of the splendid temple of Solomon.

But there is no reason for questioning the fact that, in a rudimentary form suited to the conditions of wilderness life, a simple tent of meeting was constructed by Moses as the place of Jehovah's abode. We might infer this not only from considera-

tions of *a priori* probability and from the express testimony of tradition, but also from the very structure of the more elaborate sanctuary, which in its arrangements appears to be modelled on the ancient shepherd's tent, with its open court, its large outer apartments, and its private sanctum.

5. The real sanctuary under Moses was called the "tent of meeting." It was a tabernacle of perfectly simple design, an open tent pitched outside the camp. There was no ceremonial in the service and no Levite attached. Moses' servant Joshua had sole charge of it. But if this tabernacle was free from all ritual, the religion of which it was the centre was alive and intensely spiritual. In it was continued the intercourse which began on Mount Sinai; in it Moses spoke to Jehovah as a friend to his friend; in it the patriot-prophet in glowing entreaties pleaded for his rebellious people against the wrath of Jehovah; and there, lastly, in his solitary meditations he learned to discern the plan of God and His intentions towards Israel.

¶ The Prophetic Tradition, speaking of this sanctuary where God, day by day, was perfecting the education of His messenger, has preserved, in a naïve but suggestive form, the memory of all the anxieties which perpetually carried back the fervent soul of Moses towards God. For instance, the episode of Moses beseeching his God to accompany him in his stern mission and asking Jehovah for a material proof of His presence: "Shew me, I pray thee, thy glory." Jehovah's reply teaches us that whoever wishes to know Him must seek Him, not in any dazzling and impressive vision, nor in any bewildering external prodigy, but in the secret depths of the heart: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee," and in an attentive observation of the way in which Providence asserts itself and reveals the presence and intentions of God: "Thou shalt see my back." The religion inaugurated by Moses was very slow in winning the soul of his people. Among the Israelites who during the long wanderings in the desert came daily before the Tent of Meeting to know Jehovah's will and receive Moses' instruction, who knows how many grasped the true meaning of the teaching of their God? Their coarse misconceptions and perpetual backslidings are sufficient proof that at no period of their history were the true worshippers very numerous. But the fact remains that, from the very outset, the proper course of the worship in spirit was admirably mapped out. The Tent of Meeting and the altar of unhewn stones are marvellously suited

to the demands of the religion of the Decalogue and the law of love. The worship and the law combine to evoke in the Israelite's still dark and carnal soul the piety due to the God who "looketh on the heart."[1]

6. What are the lessons to be taught by the tabernacle thus understood as an idealization?

(1) The supreme idea of the Priests' Code is the realization of the *presence of God* in the midst of His people (Exod. xxv. 8, xxix. 42). Other ideas, closely associated with this, are the *unity of God*, which required the unity and centralization of His worship; and the *holiness of God*, which required as its correlative the holiness of His people (Exod. xix. 6; Deut. xiv. 2; Lev. xix. 2, and elsewhere). In the tabernacle, and the ceremonial system of which it is the centre, these ideas find a concrete, symbolical expression. The tabernacle is a carefully planned and splendid structure, designed to honour worthily the God who is to make it His abode. By its position in the very centre of the camp, it is a significant visible symbol of the presence of Jehovah in the midst of His people. Its holiness is at the same time guarded by its being encircled by a cordon formed by the camps of the Levitical families and the priests, the other tribes being encamped outside these, three on each side. By the details of its structure, and by the significant gradations in the costliness and splendour of the materials of which it is made, it at once gives expression to, and guards, the supreme holiness of Jehovah. The imageless, inmost shrine is an acknowledgment of His spirituality, as its splendour does homage to His sovereignty; while the limitations on even the high priest's access to it are an indication of the conditions on which God is accessible to man. The unity of God is marked by the fact that the sanctuary is one, and the worship one. The ceremonial of purification and sacrifice which centres in the tabernacle is the means by which the ideal relation of holiness and good-will subsisting between Jehovah and His people is maintained.

¶ Cosin preached, at the close of 1626, at the consecration of Francis White as Bishop of Carlisle. In his sermon, which was based on John xx. 21, 22, he remarked: "No doubt but Christ (an it had pleased Him) might have given His Apostles the Spirit

[1] A. Westphal, *The Law and the Prophets*, 203.

without any breathing upon them at all; the substance without the ceremony. And had He so done He had got some men's hearts by it for ever, which now He is like to lose; theirs that condemn all ceremonies in religion for vanity and superstition. Now much pity it was that these ceremony-haters of our day had not then been living and standing by, to advise and to put Christ in mind what a foundation He would lay here for superstition and Popery, and how much better it had been to have made no more ado but to have come, as they used to do, with the Spirit only, and so be gone. Yet thus it was not . . . the truth is, He did seldom or never any great act without a ceremony." [1]

(2) But the lessons which the historical interpretation may draw from the tabernacle are chiefly, as in Heb. viii.–x., lessons of contrast. In the New Testament the self-revelation of God is seen, not in a building, however perfect, but in a Person, Jesus Christ, who tabernacled among us (John i. 14), ate with publicans and sinners, and denied that unwashen hands or unclean meats defile a man. In Him revelation became unrestricted, access to God universal, the thought of God's holiness subordinated to the thought of His Fatherhood, the necessity of man's ceremonial cleanness abrogated, and the ancient, timorous, ethical purity, which scrupulously sought to protect itself against defilement, transformed into a courageous, hopeful, all-conquering love; while the tent of the ancient national sanctuary has become in the world-religion conterminous with the arch of heaven, under which the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

And so through all, the veil of form and type
  Kept men from gazing on the perfect truth,
  Sense-bound they waited, as the heir, in youth,
Waits for the time of will and judgment ripe.

But now the veil is drawn aside, and we
  The words of prophets, kings, and psalmists scan,
  Find in the Christ the one true Son of Man,
In Him the one true Lord and Saviour see.

No fear lest we behold the glory fade:
  The more we gaze, intenser grows the light,
  Till we too mirror back the radiance bright,
And heaven's own sunshine lightens earth's cold shade.

[1] P. H. Osmond, *A Life of John Cosin* (1913), 41.

So pass we on through Christ-like youth and age,
Till God's full image shines on us imprest,
And we, in being like Him fully blest,
Reach the high bliss of God's own heritage.[1]

[1] E. H. Plumptre.

MOSES.

X.

The Great Intercession.

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The Great Intercession.

Therefore he said that he would destroy them,
Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach,
To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.—Ps. cvi. 23.

Moses with his minister Joshua remained for forty days and nights in the mount. It was believed that during this time the Divine pattern of the future tabernacle and its furniture was delivered to him. Meanwhile, however, the first signal act of apostasy on the part of the newly-enfranchised nation took place.

The episode is one of the most vivid and dramatic in the Old Testament. It illustrates in a remarkable manner the actual religious condition of the bulk of the Israelites, the character of Moses himself, and the nature of the revelation given to him.

I.

The Golden Calf.

They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshipped a molten image.
Thus they changed their glory
For the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.—Ps. cvi. 19, 20.

The Israelites had, no doubt, been deeply impressed both by their deliverance and by the extraordinary manifestation of Mount Sinai; but they were far from being ready to receive the pure and exalted teaching respecting God which Moses had delivered. Ancestral traditions, stretching back into the dim past—of Jehovah a tribal God, like the *Elohim* of other nations, worshipped under the form of an image, and in a free and joyful manner with sacrificial feasts and revels—soon reasserted themselves. The mighty personality of Moses was removed for the time; and fears for the future, as well, perhaps, as superstitious dread of the cloud-

capped mountain looming above them, combined to raise the outcry to Aaron: "Up, make us gods (*Elohim*), which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him" (Exod. xxxii. 1). Aaron yielded to their clamour, and from their golden earrings (perhaps chosen because they were worn as amulets by women and children, and had religious associations) he fashioned a calf (possibly a winged bull, like the cherubim, or like the ox-idols of Egypt). It was welcomed with the shout, "These be thy gods (*Elohim*), O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt"; an altar was erected, and a solemn feast was proclaimed by Aaron in its honour, as if it were actually the God it represented: "To-morrow is a feast to the Lord." The feast-day was celebrated with the usual burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, feasting, drinking, and riotous revellings;—but it was a day destined to be stamped deeply on the conscience and memory of Israel.

1. The revolt was universal: "The people gathered themselves together." It was a national rebellion, a flood which swept away even some faithful, timid hearts. No voices ventured to protest. What were the elders, who shortly before "saw the God of Israel," doing to be passive at such a crisis? Was there no one to bid the fickle multitude look up to the summit overhead, where the red flames glowed, or to remind them of the hosts of Egypt lying stark and dead on the shore?

We need not cast stones at these people; for we also have short memories for either the terrible or the gracious revelations of God in our own lives. But we may learn the lesson that God's lovers have to set themselves sometimes dead against the rush of popular feeling, and that there are times when silence or compliance is sin.

¶ The host, where Dr. MacGregor was guest, indulged in some remarks of a jocular nature, which implied a scoffing at religion as something not worth consideration. The sting of his remark lay in the fact that, as our host, he implied our concurrence in his remarks, which were made apparently in all good nature and genial outspokenness. It was an awkward moment, and I remember feeling the perplexing distress of the situation. Dr. MacGregor, with a courage I shall never forget, reproved, and that effectually, the spirit in which the remarks were made, and his

words produced an apologetic silence. In that there might have been nothing out of the way, but few men could have done it as he did. He made no scene, did not fortify himself with a fit of indignation, but solely by the firmness and moral force of the rebuke shamed the speaker into a sense of his mistake. There was no breach of friendship, or interruption of courtesy, only perhaps a minute's silence, and thereafter the evening passed pleasantly enough. I am sure no one rose from the table without having a deep sense of Dr. MacGregor's moral courage in a very trying and delicate occasion.[1]

2. Still sadder than their sense-bound wish is Aaron's compliance. He knew as well as we do what he should have said, but, like many another man in influential position, when beset by popular cries, he was frightened, and yielded when he should have "set his face like a flint." His compliance has in essentials been often repeated, especially by priests and ministers of religion who have lent their superior abilities or opportunities to carry out the wishes of the ignorant populace, and debased religion or watered down its prohibitions to please and retain hold of them. The Church has incorporated much from heathenism. Roman Catholic missionaries have permitted "converts" to keep their old usages. Protestant teachers have acquiesced in, and been content to find the brains to carry out, compromises between sense and soul, God's commands and men's inclinations.

¶ At the end of a note to Mr. Drummond on Tithes that evening, I expressed myself plainly about the House-tax and the shopkeepers, avowing my dread that Lord Althorp might yield to the clamour. Mr. Drummond called next day with the promised tithe document; and he told me that he had handed my note to Lord Althorp, who had said, "Tell her that I may be altogether of her mind; but that if she was here, in my place, with hundreds of shopkeepers yelling about the doors, she would yield, as I must do." "Never," was my message back, "so long as the House-tax is admitted to be the best on the list." And I fairly told him that the Whig government was perilling the public safety by yielding everything to clamour, and nothing without it.[2]

3. There is nothing improbable in the story that the Israelites in the desert fell into this sin. The prohibition of metal images

[1] *Dr. MacGregor of St. Cuthberts*, 527.
[2] *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*, i. 263.

as symbols of deity was one of the fundamental principles of Moses' teaching, while the temptation to symbolize their deity under the form of a young bull—for such is the meaning of "calf" here—was one that might have presented itself very easily to the Israelites even in the desert, not because of their knowledge of the Egyptian animal-worship (which was of a very different type), but simply because of the widespread use of the bull as a symbol of deity throughout the Semitic world.

Two or three centuries later, bull images again emerge in the history of Israel. Among the measures taken by Jeroboam I. for the consolidation of his new kingdom was one which was primarily designed to secure its independence of the rival kingdom of the South in the all-important matter of public worship. With this end in view, perhaps also with the subsidiary purpose of reconciling the priesthood of the local sanctuaries to the new order of things, Jeroboam set up two golden "calves," one at Bethel and the other at Dan, the two most important sanctuaries, geographically and historically, in his realm.

It is now admitted on all hands that the bulls are to be recognized as symbols of Jehovah. He, and He alone, was worshipped, both in the wilderness and at Bethel and Dan, under the symbol of the golden bull. For the source of this symbolism we must look not to Egypt, as did the scholars of former days, but to the primitive religious conceptions of the Semitic stock to which the Hebrews belonged. Evidence, both literary and monumental, has accumulated in recent years, showing that among their Semitic kin the bull was associated with various deities as the symbol of vital energy and strength. Jeroboam, therefore, may be regarded as having merely given official sanction to a symbolism with which the Hebrews had been familiar, if not from time immemorial, at least since their association with the Canaanites.

¶ From the time of Philo onwards it has commonly been supposed that the symbolism was derived from Egypt, where the bull Apis was revered in the temple at Heliopolis as the incarnation of Osiris, and the bull Mnevis in the temple of Ptah at Memphis, as the incarnation of the sun-god. There are, however, objections to this view. (1) The Egyptians worshipped only the *living* animals, not images of them; (2) it is unlikely that an image

reflecting an Egyptian deity would have been chosen as the symbol of the national God, Jehovah, or have been represented as the deity who had delivered Israel from Egypt; (3) it is equally unlikely that Jeroboam should have sought to secure his throne by inviting his people to adopt the symbolism of a foreign cult. For these reasons most recent writers (including Dillmann) prefer to seek the origin of the bull-symbolism in the native beliefs either of the Israelites themselves, or of the Semitic nations allied to them.[1]

4. The great lesson of the incident is thus the danger of a false worship of the true God. In the present case this was through an inappropriate use of symbolism. Symbolism has its uses. The inability to realize the unseen and abstract justifies it. Men must depend on the tangible and illustrative. Speech is symbolic, the sign of thought. Poetry, music, art are symbolic. They suggest more than they actually express. When the tendency of symbolism is to suggest something beyond and above itself, it is legitimate and wholesome. But the dangers of symbolism are obvious.

¶ The spirit of prayer like that of imagination is awakened in different persons by different objects. Some need such traditional symbols as the Madonna and the Crucifix to inspire it, others again find such symbols, from the very fact of their long familiarizing usage, void of appeal. Their virtue has gone out of them. Unfortunately it is in the nature of symbols either to wear out, or to become mere idols. A change of symbols is one of those needs of humanity that the Christian Church has not recognized.[2]

(1) There is danger in the direction of *elaboration.*—The more difficult and spiritual the thing to be symbolized, the more elaborate the symbolism is apt to become. Instead of being an open window to the sky, it becomes a veil whose elaborate design attracts and holds the eye to itself. This is the danger of ceremonialism in worship.

(2) In the direction of *materialization.*—Instead of assisting the mind to rise through the material to the spiritual, it panders to the weakness of the mind by conforming the spiritual to the material. Instead of kindling the imagination, it quenches it. This is the danger of idolatry. The history of Israel, with its

[1] S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, 348.

[2] Richard Le Gallienne, *The Religion of a Literary Man*, 79.

calf-worship, shows the effects of the latter tendency. The history of Judah, with its imageless worship, but elaborate ceremonial, shows the evils of the former tendency. The meaning of the prophetic movement is found in its opposition to both tendencies. In the Roman Catholic form of Christianity the same dangers are manifested in a crass and obvious form. Rome, like ancient Israel, expresses its instincts in *material* symbols of ceremonial and image-worship, and often with just as fatal consequences. But is not Protestantism exposed to parallel or analogous dangers, though in a more refined and more subtle form? Protestantism expresses its instincts in *intellectual* symbols—as the creeds have often been called—as signs of Christian faith. These also have their place and uses. They seek to clarify our ideas of God. But most of our creeds have been born in sectarian controversy. They often superficially clarify only because they limit the idea of God. The God of these creeds, while in form the God of the whole earth, is in essence an intellectual idol; for in them definition becomes limitation, and limitation is of the essence of idolatry. The present demand for simplification in theology and creedal statement is in line with the prophetic movement in its desire to pass beyond both the material form and the purely intellectual formula to a more spiritual religion.

¶ Idol is *Eidolon,* a thing seen, a symbol. It is not God, but a Symbol of God; and perhaps one may question whether any the most benighted mortal ever took it for more than a Symbol. I fancy, he did not think that the poor image his own hands had made *was* God; but that God was emblemed by it, that God was in it some way or other. And now in this sense, one may ask, Is not all worship whatsoever a worship by Symbols, by *eidola,* or things seen? Whether *seen,* rendered visible as an image or picture to the bodily eye; or visible only to the inward eye, to the imagination, to the intellect: this makes a superficial, but no substantial difference. It is still a Thing Seen, significant of Godhead; an Idol. The most rigorous Puritan has his Confession of Faith, and intellectual Representation of Divine things, and worships thereby; thereby is worship first made possible for him. All creeds, liturgies, religious forms, conceptions that fitly invest religious feelings, are in this sense *eidola,* things seen. All worship whatsoever must proceed by symbols, by Idols:—we may say, all Idolatry is comparative, and the worst Idolatry is only *more* idolatrous.

Where, then, lies the evil of it? Some fatal evil must lie in it, or earnest prophetic men would not on all hands so reprobate it. Why is Idolatry so hateful to Prophets? . . . But here enters the fatal circumstance of Idolatry, that, in the era of the Prophets, no man's mind *is* any longer honestly filled with his Idol or Symbol. Before the Prophet can arise who, seeing through it, knows it to be mere wood, many men must have begun dimly to doubt that it was little more. Condemnable Idolatry is *insincere* Idolatry. Doubt has eaten-out the heart of it: a human soul is seen clinging spasmodically to an Ark of the Covenant, which it half-feels now to have become a Phantasm. This is one of the balefulest sights. Souls are no longer *filled* with their Fetish; but only pretend to be filled, and would fain make themselves feel that they are filled. "You do not believe," said Coleridge; "you only believe that you believe." It is the final scene in all kinds of Worship and Symbolism; the sure symptom that death is now nigh. It is equivalent to what we call Formulism, and Worship of Formulas, in these days of ours. . . . It is the property of every Hero, in every time, in every place and situation, that he come back to reality; that he stand upon things, and not shows of things. According as he loves, and venerates, articulately or with deep speechless thought, the awful realities of things, so will the hollow shows of things, however regular, decorous, accredited by Koreishes or Conclaves, be intolerable and detestable to him. Protestantism too is the work of a Prophet: the prophet-work of that sixteenth century. The first stroke of honest demolition to an ancient thing grown false and idolatrous; preparatory afar off to a new thing, which shall be true, and authentically divine![1]

II.

The Intercession.

And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.—Exod. xxxii. 31, 32.

1. Jehovah Himself informed Moses of the apostasy of Israel, and the dialogue between the lawgiver and his God shows how partially even Moses had apprehended the Divine Nature. Jehovah's words were, "I have seen this people, and behold it is

[1] Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship.*

a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." But Moses, singularly destitute of personal ambition, showed no desire to be exalted at the expense of the people whom he had delivered. He prayed Jehovah to remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and how He had delivered Israel out of Egypt, adding in remonstrance, "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?"

(1) As we read the narrative, it would almost appear as though Moses were pressing God to retreat step by step, and yield to his importunity; but, in point of fact, God was only drawing him on to comprehend the love and grace of His character. It is as though the mother, when teaching her nursling to walk, were to retire backward, as if pushed by his tiny hands, whereas, in point of fact, she is teaching him, unconsciously to himself, to walk. Our Father is so intent on leading us to advance that He appears to yield to our importunity.

(2) In his first prayer for backsliding Israel, Moses did not reach that note of supreme sacrifice which gives him a pre-eminent position among the saints of the Old Testament Scriptures. He looks at the threatened extinction of the chosen from the standpoint of the Divine honour, and declares his jealousy for God's glory among the heathen. But when he visits the mount a second time, his soul is possessed by compassion for the ignorant, infatuated crowd. In pleading with the Most High, before leaving His presence to descend to the plain, he uses as his chief argument the Divine Name, whose spotless renown must be upheld.

¶ "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There are other two instances of this in Scripture. The one, where the God of Abraham appeared to retreat before His servant's fervour for Sodom; the other, where Jesus appeared to yield to the woman of Syrophenicia. In each case the suppliant was led to assume a position of appropriating faith that had never before been reached, like the furthest wave of an advancing tide, flung far forward up the shore. This is the secret of delayed prayer. Prayer is educative. A man who prays

grows; and the muscles of the soul swell from thin whipcord to iron bands.[1]

¶ An outspoken critic, who had absorbed into his blood the genial, humanitarian theology of George MacDonald's novels, after hearing a sermon upon the intercession of Moses, said, "The preacher has succeeded in making me think much more highly of Moses than of God." For the caustic comment upon the preacher's feat there was perhaps a reason, and yet, at the same time, the preacher's exposition might not have been far astray from the letter of the incident as recorded in the Book of Exodus. At one point in the narrative, God does seem to be on the side of retributive vengeance, and Moses the advocate of gentleness and forgiving compassion. Such narratives, however, must be looked upon in the ultimate truths which emerge from them, and not in the ideas which arise as we tarry in some half-way house of interpretation into which we turn before the end comes.[2]

2. Notice Moses' blaze of wrath. In the mount he acted as intercessor. When God told him all that was transpiring in the plain below and showed the glittering sword of justice suspended over the guilty nation by a thread, he pleaded for the people whom he loved. But as he descended the mountain his anger burst forth. Before leaving the Divine presence, he had received the two tables of the testimony, written with the finger of God, and as he descended the mountain with his minister Joshua, they heard the shouts of the people. Joshua said, "There is a noise of war in the camp," but Moses answered, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear." When they came nearer, and saw the people dancing round the calf, Moses in his anger "cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." Directly he came to the people Moses had the calf burnt and ground to powder, which he mixed in water, and forced its worshippers to drink. When Moses inquired of his brother "What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought a great sin upon them?" Aaron tried to excuse himself by saying that the people had begged him to make a god for them, and had given him their golden jewels to cast into the furnace, adding, "and there came out this calf."

[1] F. B. Meyer. [2] T. G. Selby, *The God of the Patriarchs*, 190.

For so great a sin against Jehovah, vengeance had to be taken; and Moses, when he "saw that the people were broken loose; for Aaron had let them loose for a derision among their enemies," cried, "Who is on the Lord's side?" His own tribe rallied to his call. Levi, it is recorded in the "Song of Moses," "said of his father, and of his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren" (Deut. xxxiii. 9), and attacked the people, slaying no less than three thousand of them.

¶ Only he who loves much knows what it is to feel that anger which is ennobling and Godlike.[1]

¶ The daily affairs of politics and diplomacy were for him the active scene on which good or evil worked out their immemorial war; and he watched on at the conflict with the solemn zeal of a prophet, in whose eyes God's honour was engaged. It was this which explains the heat of his words at a time like that of the Bulgarian massacres. The decision to be taken at that hour by England was felt by him to be charged with all the momentous significance that would belong to a personal choice between right and wrong. At such a public crisis, as in many a private one, a fire of moral indignation would suddenly reveal itself in him which startled the ordinary man. We are used to such passion over personal wrongs; there it gives us no surprise. But a flame of righteous anger that has no trace of personal injury in it, and that leaps up at the sight of public wrong because it is wrong, and for no other reason—this is rare indeed. And it was all the more startling, as it sprang from one so associated with courteous gentleness as the Dean. Yet there it was. No one could mistake it. It was the pure, white anger of an outraged conscience. When once you had caught sight of it, you never forgot it. It was recognized as the typical expression of his personality. I have known people who have said that it was the only human experience which gave them a clue to what was meant by the paradox of St. John, "the wrath of the Lamb." Certainly, I can imagine no one whose rebuke would be more terrible to undergo. One or two occasions on which I saw him deal with a committed offence remain imprinted on my imagination with unparalleled vividness. His condemnation was a punishment in itself, at which one trembled.[2]

3. Then came the great act of intercession. Next day Moses returned to the Lord and interceded for the people, even offering

[1] *The Life and Letters of Alfred Ainger*, 347.
[2] *Life and Letters of Dean Church*, 244.

himself as an atonement. To understand his feeling we must remember how close his connexion with this people had been.

(1) They had been the burden of his thoughts during those years in the desert. He had battled for them with Pharaoh. To lead them forth into freedom had been the great purpose of his life. He was one with them in all things; and if in all ages there have been patriotic men, ready to die, if need be, for their people or their land, can we not conceive something of the sublime self-sacrifice of this mighty patriot of old? Moreover, observe how that great sin would affect him. If we ever had a friend or a brother fall into evil, did we not feel as though the sin weighed down our own spirits—not merely the shame of it, but the sin itself? And if so, can we not form some idea of the effect of that people's crime in the great and tender heart of this holy man of God? Would not his revulsion from their sin mingle with his own love for the people? The holiest men ever feel most deeply the sin of their fellows—they see its seeds in themselves, they find its shadow falling across their heaven. A great modern writer has said that he saw in his own heart the germ of every sin. And can we tell the sense of self-abasement which such a man as Moses must have felt in that supreme moment, when, in the presence of the Infinite purity, he was interceding for his sinful people?

(2) Moses must have felt the promise of that people's future. In them might lie the germ of the world's history; through them might be unfolded the glory of Jehovah before the face of all nations. Gathering these together—intense sympathy with the people, intense grief for, and shrinking from, their sin, and belief in their future for the manifestation of the glory of God—may we not in part comprehend the depth of his words, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written"? He was willing to die, willing for heaven's lightning to fall on himself, if only the people might be spared! Is there not in the sublime self-devotion of this great servant of God in the early time a foreshadowing of that stupendous love which, in the ages to come, was to be shown by the Man Christ Jesus, in the deliverance of the whole Israel of God from a deeper and darker bondage than that of Egypt,

who was "made to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"?

¶ The idea of a suffering God was foolishness to the Greeks, who considered a God as a tyrant gloating over the sufferings of men. But the seeming contradiction is solved if one supposes that a Holy Being deposits itself, so to speak, in humanity, and that humanity then becomes defiled. That is a boundless grief like his who has deposited the best part of his soul and his emotions with a woman. If she then goes and defiles herself, she defiles her husband. Or a father's nature has passed over to his children, and he wishes to see his best impulses continued and multiplied by them, and his likeness ennobled. If the children dishonour themselves, the father suffers; the stem withers when the roots are injured.

Such I imagine to be the feelings of God the Father when the sinfulness of humanity grows noisome and dishonours Him, and perhaps threatens to affect His own holiness. He will be wroth and lament—perhaps even feel Himself defiled—rather than cut off the cancerous limb of humanity. Christ is no more represented as beautiful, but with features distorted by the sins of others; these He has taken on Himself or drawn to Himself, for he who approaches pitch is defiled. In order to be free from the impure element He must die by the destruction of the body. Incarnation involved the greatest suffering of all.[1]

4. To such imploring devotion the Almighty love which hears prayer cannot accord a grudging or ungracious response. Moses comes to find that God is more merciful than his earlier apprehension of Him implied, and towards these children of Abraham a longsuffering is extended which enfolds the hope of corporate salvation. But such a salvation cannot bar out punishment due to individual offenders. Many who belong to the nation which God consents to spare must yet look for their own dark reckoning-day. The mercy which comes forth from God's presence with its manifold riches, in response to the cry of intercession, cannot repeal personal responsibility. In the Divine government of men there must be no such thing as an indulgence which takes little account of righteousness and glosses over all past outrage and offence. The guiding presence, crowning pledge and expression of the Divine good-will, is not

[1] A. Strindberg, *Zones of the Spirit*, 155.

withdrawn, and the children of these transgressors, in due time, are to be brought into the Land of Promise. Intercession, even when it glows with such self-forgetting ardour as that which kindled in the soul of Moses, cannot move the firm foundations of the judgment-throne or arrest the retribution which must, one day, come to the renegade who goes back from God's service; but it can bear aloft the man who pleads into new apprehensions of the Divine goodness, and bring near to a nation the mercy which spares in the midst of grievous misdoing.

This principle is to be upheld. "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book," sounds like a reservation in the answer to this unselfish prayer, but is really a part of the goodness which God caused to light upon Moses, and those with whom he had identified himself. In the ancient world the ruler of the State made the family the unit with which he reckoned, and entered upon no discrimination between the different members, whilst Heaven itself was supposed to count a nation the unit of its reckoning, and to recognize no right of sacrifice and approach other than that possessed by the king as the federal head of the nation. A family was punished for the crime of any one of its separate members, and the King of Heaven was supposed to punish an entire nation for the misdemeanour of a handful of its citizens. It is not difficult to see how harsh were such ideas in their outworking. A new principle is affirmed, that in God's government of His people, neither nation nor family shall be the unit of reckoning, but the individual—a principle pregnant with all the benign changes and ameliorations which have appeared throughout the long Christian centuries. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

5. In these days of clearer light and larger privilege, how seldom do our prayers deserve the remotest kind of comparison with this memorable overwhelming prayer offered by the founder of the Jewish commonwealth! Perhaps we do not pray at all, or our prayers are dwarfed by the more prominent and absorbing interests which make up the staple of our lives. Among some people, it is to be feared, the habit has died out with the rising belief in the supremacy of natural law, although it is difficult to

see how intercessory prayer is prejudiced by scientific interpretations of the order of a physical universe. We study people, and perhaps criticize and despise them, but have not the passionate sympathy Moses felt for the multitude entrusted to his care. We do not feel called to bear the burdens which lie outside our family circles, least of all the burdens of the vicious hordes who haste to a fate they deserve. If we do pray, it is easy to detect a strain of selfish egotism in the petitions. Perhaps we pray with a half belief in the efficacy of the exercise, for causes with which we have cast in our lot, and in the prosperity of which we expect to reach our little meed of honour. If God's glory and our fair fame advance by parallel lines so much the better, but we do not care so deeply for anything which concerns the common good that we should be glad to see it brought about at the cost of our own oblivion. Alas! that such insidious, ignoble, unconfessed egoisms should colour our thoughts when we profess to come before God's mercy-seat. The temper of self-renunciation must not only enter into our lives, but suffuse and energize our prayers, if, in the spirit and by the inspiration of Him who was made a curse for us, we are to mediate between God and man, and through our prayers, in some degree, direct those influences which achieve the true redemption of the race.

¶ Intercessory prayer is in its essence a witness for the holy sovereignty of God in providence and in grace. It is a deeply practical acknowledgment that to Him all hearts are open; that He holds the key of all wills and lives; that He can indeed make "all things work together" for His glory and our blessing in Christ Jesus. And intercessory prayer is of course a tender living testimony to two great and precious facts, which run up into one. It witnesses to the Christian believer's living spiritual union with his brethren in Christ, and indeed with all men as potentially such. And it witnesses to his wonderful and blessed spiritual union with his Lord in new birth and new life, that immediate conjunction with the Head through which he has union with the members.[1]

[1] H. C. G. Moule, *All in Christ*, 101.

III.

The Presence and the Glory.

If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.—Exod. xxxiii. 15.
And he said, shew me, I pray thee, thy glory.—Exod. xxxiii. 18.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Among other things it makes him bolder in his approach to God. Moses now dares to ask God for two great gifts—the presence of Jehovah all the way, and the vision of His glory now.

i. The Presence.

1. The hosts were soon to leave the mountain region of Sinai, with which Moses had been familiar during his shepherd life, in order to take the onward road through unknown deserts, infested by daring and experienced foes. What though the pillar and cloud led them slowly along those solemn desert pathways, and at night shed a broad flood of light on the clustered tents of the desert encampment; yet the prospect of that journey through the great and terrible wilderness was sufficient to appal the stoutest heart.

¶ Such a summons to arise and depart is often sounding with its bugle-call in our ears. We are not like those who travel by the metal track of the railroad, on which they have been to and fro every day for years, and are able to tell exactly the names and order of the stations; we are like an exploring expedition in an absolutely unknown district, when even the leader, as he leaves his hammock in the morning, does not know where it will be slung at night. What seems a monotonous life, always the same, does not revolve around a beaten circle, as the horse or ass winding up buckets from a well, but is ever striking out over tracts of territory which we have not traversed before.[1]

2. Still further difficulties had lately arisen in connexion with the people's transgression. From a careful study of the passage it would seem that a change was proposed by their Almighty Friend. Hitherto He had gone in the midst of them. Now He avowed His intention of substituting an angel for Himself, lest he

[1] F. B. Meyer.

should suddenly consume the people because of their stiff-neckedness. Already the people had been bidden to strip themselves of their ornaments; and the tent, which was recognized as the temporary pavilion for God, must be pitched without the camp, afar off from the camp, so that those who sought the Lord were compelled to take a considerable journey to reach His visible shrine. But now it seemed likely that some sensible diminution of the evidence of the Divine presence and favour was about to take place; and the fear of this stirred the soul of the great leader to its depths. Like Jacob at the ford of the Jabbok, Moses felt that he could not let God go, and he told Him so: "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."

¶ One recalls the story of Robert Bruce, the Covenanter, the man whose prayers were short, but each of them "a strong bolt shot up to heaven": how, one Sabbath afternoon, in his church at Larbert, the people were surprised that he did not appear to begin the service, and sent the officer to look for him in the little room which was his oratory between sermons, and the officer halted on the threshold of the room because he overheard an interview proceeding within, and then returned to the congregation to report that there was Some One with the minister, and that Master Bruce was protesting earnestly and many times over that he could not and would not go alone into the church, but that This Other must accompany him. So McCheyne, when he had ended his own preparations for the pulpit, felt that he was still unprepared until he had importuned the same mysterious and ineffable Companion to be with him and to fulfil through him His Own good pleasure.[1]

3. The Divine answer is a promise to go with Moses. It seals to the man and to the leader the assurance that for himself he shall have the continual presence of God in his soul and in his work, and that, in all the weary march, he will have rest, and will come to a fuller rest at its end. Thus God ever answers the true hearts that seek to know Him, and to be fitted for their tasks. Whether the precise form of desire be fulfilled or not, the issue of such bold and trustful pleading is always the inward certainty of God's face shining on us, and the experience of repose, deep and untroubled in the midst of toil, so that we may be at once pilgrims towards, and dwellers in, "the house of the Lord."

[1] A. Smellie, *Robert Murray McCheyne*, 160.

When our Lord spoke of yielding to the importunity of our friends, He said that, if a man asked for a coat, we were to give him our cloak also; and that, if we were compelled to go one mile, we were to travel two. Would the Master lay down that law, and not fulfil its obligations? If, then, we ask Him to go with us on our journey to Heaven, carrying our burdens and providing for our needs, will He do this, and only this? He will assuredly see us home, but He will do exceeding abundantly. Listen. He added to His answer to Moses' request a clause which met his unuttered desire—"I will give you rest." Moses only asked God to go with him, but He said, "I will do exceeding abundantly, I will secure you from all wearing anxiety, I will take the lines from your forehead, I will give you rest."

Lord, by what inconceivable dim road
  Thou leadest man on footsore pilgrimage!
  Weariness is his rest from stage to stage,
Brief halting-places are his sole abode.
Onward he fares thro' rivers over-flowed,
  Thro' deserts where all doleful creatures rage;
  Onward from year to year, from age to age,
He groans and totters onward with his load.
Behold how inconceivable his way;
  How tenfold inconceivable the goal,
His goal of hope deferred, his promised peace;
Yea, but behold him sitting down at ease,
  Refreshed in body and refreshed in soul,
At rest from labour on the Sabbath Day.[1]

ii. The Glory.

Each request granted brings on a greater. "The gift doth stretch itself as 'tis received." Enjoyment increases capacity, and increase of capacity is increase of desire. God being infinite and man capable of indefinite growth, neither the widening capacity nor the infinite supply can have limits. This is not the least of the blessings of a devout life, that the appetite grows with what it feeds upon, and that, while there is always satisfaction, there is never satiety.

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poetical Works*, 208.

1. Moses' prayer, "Shew me thy glory," sounds presumptuous, but it was heard unblamed, and granted in so far as it was possible. It was a venial error—if error it may be called—that a soul, touched with the flame of Divine love, should aspire beyond the possibilities of mortality. At all events, it was a fault in which he has had few imitators. Our desires keep but too well within the limits of the possible. The precise meaning of the petition must be left undetermined. Only this is clear, that it was something far beyond even that face-to-face intercourse which he had had, as well as beyond that vision granted to the elders.

2. Who shall determine what it was that Moses understood and felt and wished when he employed these words? We know, of course, that before this time he had seen much more of God's glory than all other men—the bush that burned, and yet was not consumed; the Red Sea moved out from its bed; the manna rained down from above; the arid rock changed to a source of living streams! Alone, upon the top of Sinai, and amidst most dreadful signs, he had received the law of God; moreover, with the elders of the Israelites, he had beheld the pavement which the King of Israel laid for the palace where He sits enthroned—what seemed transparent sapphire-stone. What more is it that this insatiable, this high-minded servant of the Lord desires? The Lord Himself gives answer to the question, when He in so many words declares, "My face cannot be seen." That is to say, Moses has hitherto but heard the voice of Him that spake out of the cloud; now, he beseeches that the veil of mystery may be removed, and that he may be shown the face of God, beaming with heavenly light.

¶ If we are to take "glory" in its usual sense, it would mean the material symbol of God's presence, which shone at the heart of the pillar, and dwelt afterwards between the cherubim; but probably we must attach a loftier meaning to it here. Rather we should hear in Moses' cry the voice of a soul thrilled through and through with the astounding consciousness of God's favour, blessed with love-gifts in answered prayers, and yearning for more of that light which it feels to be life.[1]

¶ Lafcadio Hearn, in a letter to Krehbeil, the musician, shows a deeply rooted likeness to Thompson when he says: "I think

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that, could I create something I felt to be sublime, I should feel also that the Unknowable had selected me for a mouthpiece, for a medium of utterance, in the holy cycling of its eternal purpose, and I should know the pride of the prophet that has seen the face of God."[1]

3. If the petition be dark, the answer is yet more obscure "with excess of light." Mark how it begins—with granting, not with refusing. It tells how much the loving desire has power to bring, before it speaks of what in it must be denied. There is infinite tenderness in that order of response. It speaks of a heart that does not love to say "No," but grants our wishes up to the very edge of the possible, and wraps the bitterness of any refusal in the sweet envelope of granted requests. A broad distinction is drawn between that in God which can be revealed and that which cannot. The one is "glory," the other "goodness," corresponding, we might almost say, to the distinction between the "moral" and the "natural" attributes of God. But, whatever mysterious revelation under the guise of vision may be concealed in these words, and in the fulfilment of them in the next chapter, they belong to the "things which it is impossible for a man to utter."

4. We are on more intelligible ground in the next clause of the promise, the proclamation of the "Name." That expression is, in Scripture, always used as meaning the manifested character of God. It is a revelation addressed to the spirit, not to the sense. It is the translation, so far as it is capable of translation, of the vision which it accompanied; it is the treasure which Moses bore away from Sinai, and has shared among us all. For the "Name" contains these two elements—pardoning love and retributive justice. Now in Jesus the two elements wondrously meet, and the mystery of the possibility of their harmonious co-operation in the Divine government is solved, and becomes the occasion for the rapturous gratitude of man and the wondering adoration of principalities and powers in heavenly places. Jesus has manifested the Divine mercifulness; Jesus has borne the burden of sin and the weight of the Divine justice. The lips that said "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," also cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" The tenderest manifestation of

[1] E. Meynell, *The Life of Francis Thompson* (1913), 23.

the God "plenteous in mercy . . . forgiving iniquity" and the most awe-kindling manifestation of the God that "will by no means clear the guilty," are fused into one, when we "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

¶ It is a common saying that anything may happen behind our backs: transcendentally considered, the thing has an eerie truth about it. Eden may be behind our backs, or Fairyland. But this mystery of the human back has, again, its other side in the strange impression produced on those behind: to walk behind anyone along a lane is a thing that, properly speaking, touches the oldest nerve of awe. Watts has realized this as no one in art or letters has realized it in the whole history of the world; it has made him great. There is one possible exception to his monopoly of this magnificent craze. Two thousand years before, in the dark scriptures of a nomad people, it had been said that their prophet saw the immense Creator of all things, but only saw Him from behind.[1]

"I do beseech thee, God, show me Thy face."
"Come up to me in Sinai on the morn!
Thou shalt behold as much as may be borne."
And on a rock stood Moses, lone in space.
From Sinai's top, the vaporous, thunderous place,
God passed in cloud, an earthy garment worn
To hide, and thus reveal. In love, not scorn,
He put him in a clift of the rock's base,
Covered him with His hand, his eyes to screen—
Passed—lifted it: His back alone appears!
Ah, Moses, had He turned, and hadst thou seen
The pale face crowned with thorns, baptized with tears,
The eyes of the true Man, by men belied,
Thou hadst beheld God's face, and straightway died![2]

IV.

Unconscious Transfiguration.

Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone.—Exod. xxxiv. 29.

When Moses came down among the people, they perceived that his face shone. Being with God, he had in a sense become trans-

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *G. F. Watts.*

[2] George MacDonald, *A Book of Sonnets* (*Poetical Works*, i. 251).

figured. It was in similar circumstances that our Lord also underwent transfiguration. "As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered." In both cases, perhaps, it was not some external light that fell on their faces, but something within—an elevation of nature, due to the fellowship of God—that revealed itself without, in the face and form. In Christ's case it was perhaps what He was, revealing itself; in the case of Moses it was something which he had become. The words of Scripture sometimes appear paradoxical. Yet perhaps they are always true. Moses was made partaker of the Divine nature. He went up burdened with the needs of the people, his heart filled with thoughts almost too great to be contained. He came back with a certain God-likeness impressed upon him.

1. The people perceived the glory upon Moses, though he wist not that his face shone. There is in men, if one might say so, an instinct for God. They perceive His marks; they are sensitive to godliness. Perhaps it was this that Christ referred to when He uttered some of the most serious words that ever fell from His lips, about speaking against the Holy Ghost — "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." He meant wilfully contradicting that instinct which could not but recognize, in Himself and in His works, the good Spirit of God. This instinct is the hope of all who come from God to men. And we all do this. The words of Christ, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," were not meant to be confined to the Apostles. One of these Apostles says to his converts, "Ye are an epistle of Christ."

¶ If, when the mother went into the nursery, the children felt that she was a letter to them from Christ; or if, when the father joined the household in the evening or the master went among his workmen, household and workmen felt as if a message from Christ had come to them, how changed things would be! For children, households, and workmen—all men everywhere—have this instinct for God, that recognizes God. The capabilities of this instinct cannot be measured, nor the opportunities it offers. For it is not a thing that belongs to one part of man's nature; it is rather a network of sensibilities overspreading the whole nature; and it can be touched, and played upon, and the heart can be awakened through it in a thousand fashions. And it is most readily affected

indirectly and informally, when it, so to speak, itself discovers and feels, without having anything obtruded upon it, as the sleeping eye is awakened just by the presence of the day-dawn. That which it is alive to is something just as broad as itself—what we call character. If in the infinite forms in which a character reveals or betrays itself, in words or tones or gestures or actions, in all that constitutes a life—if, I say, in all this infinite variety there breathe out godliness, it will touch some sensibility, something in other minds, and be recognized.[1]

2. The people felt what Moses himself was not conscious of; he wist not that his face shone. He was the last to be conscious of anything in himself above the common. He was averse to assume the great place he had to take. The man was very meek. He had learned in the school of adversity. A later writer ventures to say of him, that he had ere now borne the reproach of Christ. He was unconscious of the power he possessed, and of the fragrance of God which every movement of his life breathed out upon the people.

In all regions of life, the consummate apex and crowning charm of excellence is unconsciousness of excellence. Whenever a man begins to imagine that he is good, he begins to be bad; and every virtue and beauty of character is robbed of some portion of its attractive fairness when the man who bears it knows, or fancies, that he possesses it. The charm of childhood is its perfect unconsciousness, and the man has to win back the child's heritage, and become "as a little child," if he would enter into and dwell in the "Kingdom of Heaven." And so in the loftiest region of all, that of the religious life, we may be sure that the more a man is like Christ, the less he knows it; and the better he is, the less he suspects it.

¶ This unconscious transfiguration has been remarked in many notable saints—McCheyne for instance. When death had called him away, a note was opened which the post had brought to the door during his illness. It was written by one who was a total stranger, to thank him for the hour of worship at Broughty Ferry. "I heard you preach last Sabbath evening, and it pleased God to bless that sermon to my soul. It was not so much what you said, as your manner of speaking, that struck me. I saw in you a beauty in holiness that I never saw before." Everything about

[1] A. B. Davidson, *The Called of God*, 136.

McCheyne drew men Christward. More than most, he was the living epistle, signed with the King's autograph and sealed by His Spirit. It was with him as with young Sir Pelleas: they who met him wondered after him,

> because his face
> Shone like the countenance of a priest of old
> Against the flame about a sacrifice
> Kindled by fire from heaven.[1]

I saw thee once, and nought discern'd
For stranger to admire;
A serious aspect, but it burn'd
With no unearthly fire.

Again I saw, and I confessed
Thy speech was rare and high;
And yet it vex'd my burden'd breast,
And scared, I knew not why.

I saw once more, and awe-struck gazed
On face, and form, and air;
God's living glory round thee blazed—
A Saint—a Saint was there![2]

[1] A. Smellie, *Robert Murray McCheyne*, 203.
[2] J. H. Newman, *Verses on Various Occasions.*

MOSES.

XI.

From Sinai to Kadesh.

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From Sinai to Kadesh.

And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel.—Num. x. 35, 36.

The picture suggested by this text is a very striking and vivid one. We see the bustle of the morning's breaking up of the encampment of Israel. The pillar of cloud, which had lain diffused and motionless over the tabernacle, gathers itself together into an upright shaft, and moves, a dark blot against the glittering blue sky, the sunshine masking its central fire, to the front of the encampment. Then the priests take up the ark, the symbol of the Divine Presence, and fall into place behind the guiding pillar. Then come the stir of the ordering of the ranks, and a moment's pause, during which the leader lifts his voice—"Rise up, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." Then, with braced resolve and confident hearts, the tribes set forward on the day's march.

¶ Long after those desert days a psalmist laid hold of the old prayer and offered it, as not antiquated yet by the thousand years that had intervened. "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered," prayed one of the later psalmists; "let them that hate him flee before him." We, too, in circumstances so different, may take up the immortal though ancient words, on which no dimming rust of antiquity has encrusted itself, and may, at the beginnings and the endings of all our efforts and of each of our days, and at the beginning and ending of life itself, offer this old prayer—the prayer which asked for a Divine Presence in the incipiency of our efforts, and the prayer which asked for a Divine Presence in the completion of our work and in the rest that remaineth.[1]

The chief incidents of the journey from Mount Sinai to Kadesh are the visit of Hobab to the camp, the prophesying of Eldad and Medad, the jealousy of Aaron and Miriam, and the

[1] A. Maclaren.

sending out of the spies. We shall touch these in order. But first of all let us hear the blessing.

I.

The Blessing.

The Scriptures are rich, characteristically rich, uniquely rich, in the matter of doxologies and of benedictions; if only these two forms of worship, the exercise of the soul towards God and man respectively, were to be collected, what a lovely little book would be made by the process of selection! what mountain tops of dogma would be reached, what Pisgah sights of Christian experience would be rolled out before our eyes and before our feet—that is to say, before our faith—so that we might acknowledge the grace and possess the land, the good land which the Lord our God giveth us! All that has ever been said of the Divine Nature would be in the book, for the doxologies and the benedictions use the same theological language. If one says "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," the other responds with "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with thy spirit," so that the benediction is itself a creed, and a creed which is a life, and a life which is love. No stronger statements, no deeper insight into the full meaning of salvation, can ever be obtained than those which fall upon our ears when the Lord or His messengers are set to bless the people. And this is not only true of the New Testament, it occurs and prevails throughout the Old; if the degree varies, the benediction is the same in kind: the same grace and the same glory from the same Lord, who is rich unto all that call upon Him in truth, especially when they call upon Him for others.

One of the most deeply significant passages of the Old Testament (Num. vi. 24–26) states the form of the priestly blessing to be given by "Aaron and his sons" to Israel:—

> The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:
> The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
> The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

1. The benediction will be found located in the midst of matter of all degrees of spiritual value; so that, if we were reading continuously, we should stumble upon it unexpectedly, and pass away from it, when we had read it, much as we would pass from an oasis into a desert. For it is preceded, in the Biblical narration, by the rules for the manufacture and the administration of "cursing water," of which the spiritual value is not very evident. In the same connexion we have the law by which the Nazirite separates himself from wine and strong drink; and while perhaps, we shall have to admit that the Nazirite went into the region of ethical extravagance in refusing to touch even the seeds of the grape, we can hardly say that Nazirite vows are out of date or that they have lost their spiritual value. So the benediction is preceded by matter that cannot be uniformly classified when we are estimating spiritual truth or utility. But, doubt as we may about the setting of the benediction and the relative value in morals or in history of that in the midst of which it is found, we can have no doubt about the benediction itself. That, at all events, is pure gold.

2. The benediction falls into three parts, corresponding to the three verses into which, in our English Version, it has been divided. Each, too, of the three parts is symmetrical, consisting of a Divine attitude and its consequent result. Thus, in the first verse, we have the Lord *blessing* His people in the most general sense of the word, followed by His *keeping* them, or by the sense of security which His blessing ought to impart. In the second, we have the Lord *making His face to shine*, with the consequent assurance of the Divine *grace* and favour resting on those who sun themselves in His light. And in the third, we have the Lord *lifting up His countenance*, as a token of the Divine approval, and so imparting a sense of inward and abiding *peace* in the hearts of all true worshippers.

(1) The benediction is not a mere general expression of kindly good wishes, not a mere utterance of prayerful goodwill, such as might be spoken to a company of pagans or of unbelievers. The direction appended makes this plain, "They shall put my name upon the children of Israel." The Lord's name is not a vain word. It is a strong refuge into which the righteous run and are

saved. The Lord, present in His Church, blesses His people there. "The Lord bless thee." More particularly it is added, "The Lord keep thee." The Lord is the Keeper of Israel. His people are His vineyard, of which He says, "I the Lord do keep it; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Jehovah Shomer—the Lord the Keeper—is the title under which the Lord is praised in the 121st Psalm, a favourite psalm with old and young, which may be looked upon as being the Church's response to her Lord's words of blessing. The benefit intended is a very comprehensive one. If we were asked to specify the particulars embraced in it, we could make use of the specification given more than once in the Psalms, and say that the Lord, having delivered the souls of His people from death, keeps their eyes from tears, and their feet from falling.

¶ It would be difficult in the splendid record of nineteenth-century missions to find a more courageous and self-denying action than the consent of Mrs. Chalmers to remain alone amid a horde of cannibals for the sake of Christ's work among them, and for the benefit of her Rarotongan fellow-workers. When her husband left her there was no possibility of receiving any tidings of him until he himself brought back the tale of his wanderings. She knew him well enough to realize that places of danger attracted rather than repelled him, and that the worse the reputation possessed by any tribe or place the more likely he was to visit it. They had only a few weeks before passed through experiences which might well have unnerved the strongest. Chalmers came to know afterwards, from one of the chiefs, that again and again the murder of the whole missionary party had been determined, and that those appointed to do the deed had come once and again to the low fence which surrounded the rough mission home. They had only to step over it and rush in upon and murder the unarmed man and his wife. Had they done this they would have been hailed as heroes by local Suau opinion. But the same chief told Chalmers that at the low fence they were restrained by some mysterious thing which held them back. What was it? To the devout mind there can be no doubt. It was the restraining Hand of that God and Father in whom both His servants so firmly trusted, at whose call they had come to Suau, and for whose sake they were willing to lay down their lives.[1]

(2) From the benediction we learn next that God makes His face to shine upon us, and it is easy to infer that He does this

[1] R. Lovett, *James Chalmers*, 167.

either directly or by reflection. Nor will it be easy to decide in which of these two ways the illumination may come, whether from the immediate life and light of God or from the dwelling of God in some neighbour soul. For it is constantly happening in each of the two ways. To use the similitudes of the Holy Grail, we have first the case of Percival's sister, who sees the vision, after long prayer and fasting and patience, in her own cell, upon whose white walls the Heavenly Vision descends, and the sweet Grail is seen—

> Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive.

That is the first form of the vision, according to which "God has a few of us" (and one is tempted to ask, "Why not many?") "whom He whispers in the ear." Or to get back to Biblical language, "In all ages Wisdom enters into holy souls, and makes them friends of God and prophets." That is direct vision and immediate audition—the seeing for oneself of which Job talked.

But then, still on the line of the Holy Grail and its lessons, there are those who see through the eyes of the one that has seen, such as Percival and Galahad when the message comes to them that "the holy thing is here again among us, brother."

> She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
> Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
> On him, and he believed in her belief.

That is the indirect vision; it leads on to direct vision later, but it begins, as Galahad confesses, with what "thy sister taught me first to see." This is a Scriptural method; it is in the Old Testament, in the form, "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is," and in the New Testament in form, "That which our eyes have looked upon declare we unto you."

¶ I have a conviction that it often pleases God to humble us by the means which He chooses to illuminate us. It is related of Jacob Behmen, the great German mystic, that the immediate cause of the revelation which changed his whole life was the reflection of a sunbeam upon him from a bit of glass or tin that was lying in the road. From that bit of tin he became illuminated and illuminating. William Law sat at his feet, and so, they say, did Hegel and ever so many more noble souls. All that, shall we say, from one little bit of tin? Well, that will serve for allegory. Suppose the bit of tin to be a human soul, the humblest of souls,

humbler for its very vision, less because it has become more; how often does the Lord send us to school to such, that they may tell us the secrets of the Kingdom, and instruct us how we may more effectively lose ourselves and find Him! It pleases Him to perfect praise in a choir of babes and so to still the enemy and the avenger; He sets the old to learn of the young, the rich of the poor, the scribe of the illiterate. It makes for solidarity, too, when maid-servants prophesy, and when old men and young men are able to exchange their dreams.[1]

(3) Of the varied gifts and graces which we ask God to grant us, or to aid us to obtain, none figures more frequently in Scripture than peace. Now, in the more external sense of the word, the reason for this frequent prayer is painfully obvious. That God in this sense may grant peace to our land, and to all those who dwell within it, must be our fervent prayer. And yet, even in the external sense, there may be some limitation. For we do not desire the peace of mere repression, the peace of death. In other words, we distinguish, even here, between a right peace and a wrong peace, like the prophets of old who denounced those who cried Peace, when there was no peace.

But there is also peace and strife in the lives of individuals. The excellences of contentment have been often sung. We are to be satisfied with our lot; we are not to repine; we must not desire the impossible, and so on. Nothing is more familiar than all this, and nothing more commonplace. Yet, at the same time, we are only a little less familiar with the very opposite, or apparently the very opposite, teaching. We have often heard of a noble discontent. If there were too much satisfaction and content, would civilization, as we know it, have come into being? Why should a man be contented with his lot if he can improve it? Should we rest content with evil, with imperfection? And may not different people take different views of imperfection?

We want, to some extent, at every period of manhood and womanhood, to strive and attain together; we want both struggle and rest. If peace is the end, it must not be merely an end deferred till the close of existence or enjoyed beyond the grave. So too, on the other hand, we feel that movement, progress and development, though not necessarily strife and struggle, can hardly be dissociated from any human or desired existence, whether in

[1] J. Rendel Harris, *Aaron's Breastplate*, 191.

this life or in another. When we think of God Himself, we can conceive Him as enjoying, or as being, either perfect and continuous rest or perfect and continuous activity. That rest upon the Sabbath day which is ascribed to Him may be regarded as a figure of His permanent condition; and, on the other hand, His joyous activity, as elsewhere depicted in human terms, may be also regarded as a figure for what He continually is.

¶ I think this higher peace, which at once reconciles and strengthens, which calms us and clears our vision, which gives a certain stability and fixity to our souls, which, while preventing our falling into sloth or conceit, frees us from restlessness and from the bondage of unsatisfied desire, which gives us the consciousness of attainment, the consciousness of *permanence* even amid the transitoriness of ourselves and of outward things—I believe that this higher peace can only fitly be described as the Peace of God.[1]

¶ "Do not answer this," wrote a Minister to Miss Nightingale, "for I am sure you must have more on your hands now than a Secretary of State." But what struck those about her was her perfect calm. "No one is so well fitted as she to do such work," wrote Lady Canning to Lady Stuart de Rothesay; "she has such nerve and skill, and is so wise and quiet. Even now she is in no bustle and hurry, though so much is on her hands, and such numbers of people volunteer services." She was quiet because, like Wordsworth's Happy Warrior, in the heat of excitement, she "kept the law in calmness made, and saw what she foresaw." Like the character drawn by another master-hand, "in the tumult she was tranquil," because she had pondered when at rest.[2]

II.

Hobab.

1. When the Israelites were about to leave Sinai, Moses invited Hobab, the son of Reuel, the Midianite, to become their guide: "As thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou shalt be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what good soever the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." In

[1] C. G. Montefiore, *Truth in Religion*, 157.
[2] Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 160.

this way the permanent alliance between Israel and the Kenites was made.

2. The Kenites, an Arab tribe belonging to the region of Midian, and sometimes called Midianites, sometimes Amalekites, were already in close and friendly relation with Israel. Moses, when he went first to Midian, had married a daughter of their chief, Jethro; and, as we learn from Exod. xviii., this patriarch, with his daughter Zipporah, and the two sons she had borne to Moses, came to the camp of Israel at the mount of God. The meeting was an occasion of great rejoicing; and Jethro, as priest of his tribe, having congratulated the Hebrews on the deliverance Jehovah had wrought for them, "took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God," and was joined by Moses, Aaron, and all the elders of Israel in the sacrificial feast. A union was thus established between Kenites and Israelites of the most solemn and binding kind. The peoples were sworn to continual friendship. While Jethro remained in the camp his counsel was given in regard to the manner of administering justice. In accordance with it, rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens were chosen, "able men, such as feared God, men of truth, hating covetousness"; and to them matters of minor importance were referred for judgment, only the hard causes being brought before Moses. The sagacity of one long experienced in the details of government came in to supplement the intellectual power and the inspiration of the Hebrew leader. It does not appear that any attempt was made to attach Jethro and the whole of his tribe to the fortunes of Israel. The small company of the Kenites could travel far more swiftly than a great host, and, if they desired, could easily overtake the march. Moses, we are told, let his father-in-law depart, and he went to his own place. But now that the long stay of the Israelites at Sinai is over, and they are about to advance to Canaan, the visit of a portion of the Kenite tribe is made the occasion of an appeal to their leader to cast in his lot with the people of God.

3. There is some confusion in regard to the relationship of Hobab. The word translated "father in law" (Num. x. 29) means a relative by marriage. Whatever was the tie between Hobab

and Moses, it was at all events so close, and the Kenite had so much sympathy with Israel, that it was natural to make the appeal to him: "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." Himself assured of the result of the enterprise, anticipating with enthusiasm the high destiny of the tribes of Israel, Moses endeavours to persuade these children of the desert to take the way to Canaan.

¶ In E (Exod. iii. 1, iv. 18, xviii. 1, 2 ff.) the father-in-law of Moses is uniformly named Jethro. But Num. x. 29 (J) speaks of "Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father in law" (*hōthēn*). It is uncertain how this should be punctuated, and whether Hobab or Reuel was Moses' father-in-law. The former view is found in Judg. iv. 11 (cf. i. 16), the latter in Exod. ii. 18. The R.V. in Judg. i. 16, iv. 11 attempts to harmonize the two by rendering *hōthēn* "brother-in-law." But this harmonization is doubtful, for (1) though it is true that in Aramaic and Arabic the cognate word can be used rather loosely to describe a wife's relations, there is no evidence that it is ever so used in Hebrew; and it would be strange to find the father and the brother of the same man's wife described by the same term; (2) Exod. ii. 16 appears to imply that the priest of Midian had no sons. It is probable that the name Reuel was added in v. 18 by one who misunderstood Num. x. 29. The suggestion that "Hobab the son of" has accidentally dropped out before Reuel is very improbable. Thus Jethro (E) and Hobab (J) are the names of Moses' father-in-law, and Reuel is Hobab's father. A Mohammedan tradition identifies Sho'aib (perhaps a corruption of Hobab), a prophet sent to the Midianites, with Moses' father-in-law.[1]

4. The narrative of the incident is only fragmentary, for the account of Hobab's arrival at Sinai is omitted, and also the answer which he made to Moses' entreaty. It may be gathered, however, from Judg. i. 16, iv. 11, that he yielded and went with them. For there we find traces of the presence of Hobab's descendants as incorporated among the people of Israel. One of them came to be somebody—the Jael who struck the tent-peg through the temples of the sleeping Sisera, for she is called "the wife of Heber the *Kenite*." Probably, then, in some sense Hobab must have become a worshipper of Jehovah, and have cast in his lot with his son-in-law and his people.

[1] A. H. McNeile, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* (Single-volume), 355.

5. Maclaren finds three things taught by this "long-forgotten and unimportant life."

(1) It was a venture of faith. Hobab had nothing in the world to trust to except Moses' word and Moses' report of God's word. "We will do you good: God has said that He will do good to us, and you shall have your share in it." It was a grave thing, and, in many circumstances, would have been a supremely foolish thing, credulous to the verge of insanity, to risk all upon the mere promise of one in Moses' position, who had so little in his own power with which to fulfil the promise, and who referred him to an unseen Divinity, somewhere or other, and so drew bills upon heaven and futurity, and did not feel himself at all bound to pay them when they fell due, unless God should give him the cash to do it with. But Hobab took the plunge, he ventured all upon these two promises—Moses' word, and God's word that underlay it.

¶ Be content good Neighbours, and go along with me.

What! said Obstinate, and leave our Friends and our comforts behind us!

Yes, said Christian (for that was his name), because, that all, which you shall forsake, is not worthy to be compared with a little of that that I am seeking to enjoy; and if you will go along with me, and hold it, you shall fare as I my self; for there where I go, is enough and to spare; come away, and prove my words.

Obs. What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?

Chr. I seek an "inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"; and it is laid up in Heaven, and safe there, to be bestowed, at the time appointed, on them that diligently seek it.[1]

(2) Because he was stirred by the impulse of reliance on Moses and his promise, and perhaps by some germ of reliance on Moses' God, Hobab finally said, "The die is cast. I choose my side. I will break with the past. I turn my back on kindred and home. Here I draw a broad line across the page, and begin over again in an altogether new kind of life. I identify myself with these wanderers; sharing their fortunes, hoping to share their prosperity, and taking their God for my God." He had perhaps

[1] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (Cambridge edition, 145).

not been a nomad before, for there are still permanent settlements as well as nomad encampments in Arabia, as there were in those days, and he and his relatives, from the few facts that we know of them, seem to have had a fixed home, with a very narrow zone of wandering round it. So Hobab makes up his mind to begin a new career.

¶ "I remember well," says Mrs. Booth, "when the General decided finally to give up the evangelistic life and to devote himself to the salvation of the East-Enders. He had come home from the meeting one night, tired out as usual. It was between eleven and twelve o'clock. Flinging himself into an easy-chair, he said to me, 'Oh! Kate, as I passed by the doors of the flaming gin-palaces to-night, I seemed to hear a voice sounding in my ears, Where can you go and find such heathen as these, and where is there so great a need for your labours? And I felt as though I ought at every cost to stop and preach to these East End multitudes.'

"I remember the emotion that this produced in my soul. I sat gazing into the fire, and the devil whispered to me, 'This means another new departure—another start in life.'

"The question of our support constituted a serious difficulty. Hitherto we had been able to meet our expenses by the collections which we had made from our more respectable audiences. But it was impossible to suppose that we could do so among the poverty-stricken East-Enders. We had not then the measure of light upon this subject which subsequent events afforded, and we were afraid even to ask for a collection in such a locality.

"Nevertheless, I did not answer discouragingly. After a momentary pause for thought and prayer, I replied, 'Well, if you feel you ought to stay, stay. We have trusted the Lord once for our support, and we can trust Him again!' There was not in our minds, at the time we came to this decision, the remotest idea of the marvellous work which has since sprung into existence."[1]

(3) "Come with us," says Moses; "we are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good. . . . What goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." He went; and neither he nor Moses ever saw the land, or at least ever set their feet on it. Moses saw it from Pisgah, but probably Hobab did not get even so much as that. So he had all his tramping through the wilderness, and all his work for nothing, had he? Had he

[1] *Life of Catherine Booth*, i. 400.

not better have gone back to Midian, and made use of the present reality, than followed a will-o'-the-wisp that led him into a bog, if he got none of the good that he set out expecting to get? Did he make a mistake, then? Would he have been a wiser man if he had stuck to his first refusal? Surely not. The very fact of this great promise being given to this old—dare I call Hobab a "saint"?—to this old saint, and never being fulfilled at all in this world, compels us to believe that there was some gleam of hope, and of certainty, of a future life, even in these earliest days of dim and partial revelation.[1]

¶ Life is a very complicated engagement, and among the many motives to noble deeds, that of reward plays no mean part. Since good conduct, and still more good character, is so very difficult to achieve, we cannot afford to discard any of its incentives; and it were wiser to take our stand on the simple human ground of Shakespeare's Cymbeline:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.

Yet those who are least inclined to agree with Stevenson in his view of reward may still appreciate and admire the spirit of which it is the outcome. It can do none of us any harm to have our attention recalled at times from the future to the present, and to be told emphatically that energetic living is good enough in itself without a bribe. As for immortality, while there are passages in which his objection to serving for hire leads him to discount it, there are many other passages in which it is presupposed and accepted as that to which life leads on its travellers. His general attitude to the whole question is summed up in one memorable sentence of his *Memories and Portraits*, "To believe in immortality is one thing, but it is first needful to believe in life."[2]

Lord of the howling wastes of life,
Where evils watch for prey,
And many a sacred gleam of good
In shadow dies away,
Borne on by Thee in paths unknown,
Well may we trust Thy hand alone,
And suffer angels of Thy own
To shield us as they may.

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] John Kelman, *The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 163.

Revealer of a heaven encamped
Where'er Thy servants go,
By ministries of love to each,
That none beside may know,—
By wings at many a pass outspread,
By winning joy and warning dread,
We learn the word which Thou hast said,
The truth which Thou wilt show.[1]

III.

Eldad and Medad.

1. The Israelites had been once more displaying suspicion and ingratitude. Turning with loathing from the manna, they whimpered, like spoilt children, for the fish and flesh they had enjoyed in Egypt, and murmured against God and against Moses. The patience of their leader completely broke down under this new provocation, so that he went so far as to accuse God Himself of being a hard taskmaster, who had laid too much upon him. With infinite forbearance allowance was made for the manner in which Divine counsel was graciously fulfilled: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." God dealt with His servant as a father at his best will deal with his child who runs to him, hurt and bruised, in a passion of tears. Instead of beginning with an angry rebuke, help and relief are first given, and then in a few calm words the needed counsel is proffered. It was in a spirit of patient love that God appointed seventy-two elders from among the people to help His over-wrought servant and share his heavy burden.

2. Seventy of the men thus appointed came together promptly, and were ranged in a semicircle before the tabernacle. Then, in the sight of all the people, the cloud descended, wrapped them all in impenetrable mist, as a sign that the chosen men were being mysteriously baptized with the Spirit, and when again they emerged they began to prophesy. It was the ancient counterpart of the day of Pentecost, when the disciples met, and the Spirit

[1] A. L. Waring.

came upon them as a mighty, rushing wind, and they began to speak with other tongues, as men chosen and inspired by God.

¶ In the 25th verse of the eleventh chapter of Numbers, it is said that "the Lord took of the spirit that was upon Moses, and gave it unto the seventy elders." Some conclude from this statement that, as a punishment for his intemperate prayer, the wisdom of Moses was thus lessened, while others were enriched at his expense. But wisdom, and all gifts similar to it, are not diminished by distribution. If we impart information, we do not lessen our own store of knowledge. If we give of our love lavishly, yet affection is not lessened by such outpouring. The spread of fire over what is inflammable increases its intensity. Though we light a thousand candles from one which burned alone at first, it still burns brightly as before. So is it with the Spirit of whose fulness we all receive. No Christian man is poorer because his brother is enriched with grace, nor was Moses. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth."[1]

3. Two men, Eldad and Medad, although summoned with their brethren, did not come to the assembly at the tabernacle. For some reason unknown to us, they failed to put in an appearance at the critical time, when others of the elect were receiving the mysterious but efficient grace of the Spirit. Yet, at one and the same moment, they also were inspired while walking together, as they probably were doing, in some far-off part of the camp. To the amazement of the people, and doubtless to their own amazement too, they suddenly began to prophesy. Joshua exhibited some jealousy and suspicion, and would have silenced them, because the blessing had not come through Moses; but the great lawgiver, with characteristic insight and generosity, would not heed the request—"My lord Moses, forbid them." Calmly, yet decisively, the answer rang out, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them."

Three things are contained in these words.

(1) By his reply to Joshua, Moses showed his true greatness of soul. He loves his people better than himself. The cause he has really at heart is the cause of Israel, not his own honour and dignity. In the "kingdom of priests" the more kings the better. What Moses was—a man filled with God's Holy Spirit—that

[1] A. Rowland.

he desired all his people might be. The less he was separated from them by greater wisdom and goodness, the better he was pleased. The man of little mind works for his own advancement: he helps forward a cause, but it is partly that he may be known to have helped it, that he may become famous. He is envious of rivals, and wants to put a distance between himself and others. Not so Moses. He wants to draw up others to his own level. He would prefer to be one *of* many, rather than one *above* many. He is indifferent to his own renown, and anxious only for the well-being of his own people. He is willing to efface himself in his work. Hence his words contain a lesson to us all—a lesson to think of others more than of ourselves, to sink self in a common work, to strive for the success of the work rather than for personal fame.

¶ Dr. McLaren frequently referred to John the Baptist's answer to the question "Who art thou?" "I am a voice," as being the model for all time. Most truly he took to himself the advice he gave: "We must efface ourselves if we would proclaim Christ."[1]

¶ The most touching thing that has ever befallen me is the conduct of the Cambridge man who hoped to have been made Professor, when I was taken. He had for five years been preparing himself for it, and had written a book for the purpose. He is a simple student whose one aim in life it was, and who has no other prospect. All this I did not know at the time; but he wrote to me immediately on my appointment, and I asked him to come and see me. He took to me, and has now formed a strong friendship for me. So far from bearing me a grudge, he says that my coming to Cambridge will be a greater boon to him than the Professorship. Where else are people so good and so unselfish? Still more wonderful, his wife agrees with him, and we are all fast friends.[2]

(2) The man who is jealous of any infringement of his office when uncertified allies come into the field is convicted at once of thinking more of the distinction which office confers than of the work for the promotion of whose interests all office is constituted. Office is just the little circle of space made round a man, so that he may have elbow-room for the exercise of his gift. Office

[1] *Dr. McLaren of Manchester*, 211.

[2] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, i. 274.—The reference is to H. M. Gwatkin, who was elected to the chair afterwards, when Creighton became Bishop of Peterborough.

presupposes a gift, and a gift presupposes a work for the furtherance of which it has been bestowed. In God's plan, office exists for the sake of the gift, and the gift exists for the sake of the work; so that office is the least important thing of the three. The living organism always comes before the mere shell it inhabits. It is not the office that precedes and begets the gift, but the gift that creates the office; and both alike exist for the far-reaching ends that wait to be achieved. To discover, encourage, and attest a gift where it exists comes within the legitimate authority of the Church and its leaders; and perhaps in nine cases out of ten that is done. But in the tenth case the Church withholds its warranty and approval where the genuine gift exists, and in the next tenth case it certifies where there is no gift at all, and then claims that the mere empty shell of office must be respected for its own sake.

¶ A sixth hindrance is what I may call officialism, that is, a dependence for our work not on our subjective fitness, but upon official powers. It is certain that, as the objective is over-valued, the subjective is under-valued. It is curious that in the Anglican body, High Churchmen are dry, and Low Churchmen exalt their own persons. In the Catholic Church all priests are High Churchmen. And there is a danger of official assumption. But for this we should not have had the hatred and contempt of sacerdotalism. I am sorry to say that even good priests sometimes swagger; they think to magnify their office, but they belittle themselves. This has been the cause of endless troubles in hospitals and workhouses. Unfortunately even good priests are not always refined, and they resent any hindrances in the way of their sacred office with want of self-control, which gains nothing, and often loses everything. The main contention is lost in a personal dispute. I have often said that our priests are always booted and spurred like cavalry officers in time of war. But they will not fight worse for being chivalrous and courteous.[1]

(3) But the words are also notable in themselves, especially the second half of them: "Would that the Lord would put his spirit upon them." In the gift of this Spirit Moses perceives the highest well-being. When may we say that a man has received the Spirit of God? When he seems to us in all humility, and at however infinite a distance, to be like God; that is, when he is good and loving and wise. They who have the Divine Spirit are according to the highest Biblical teaching righteous and faith-

[1] *Life of Cardinal Manning*, ii. 782.

ful, pious and understanding. Therefore the prayer of Moses may be the prayer for us all: "Would that the Lord would put his spirit upon them."

IV.

Miriam's Mistake.

1. The whole story of Miriam, as recorded in the Bible, is not a long one. It may be written in a few terse phrases. Our first glimpse of her is during the days of the oppression, by the side of an ark of rushes. She was appointed her brother's guardian, to watch the issue of a last desperate expedient to save his life. How well she watched and how prudently she discharged her mission is known of all. We catch another glimpse of her just after the crossing of the sea, when Pharaoh's horsemen lay stiffening on the shore. It was Miriam who took up the theme of Moses' *Jubilate* and led the women's song: "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Save for the incident which led to the tragedy of the leprosy we could pass nothing but compliments on Miriam. But, alas for human ideals! This is an integral part of the story. The Miriam of the bondage and of prophetic gift became Miriam the leper.

2. At Hazeroth (Ain Haderah, thirty miles from Sinai), a rebellion arose against Moses, from within his own family. The jealousy of Aaron and Miriam was roused by Moses taking a second wife, an Ethiopian woman. They challenged the exclusive right of Moses to be the mouthpiece of revelation. "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?" Moses apparently made no reply. The writer parenthetically calls him "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," a meekness which was certainly not his natural character, but the result of self-discipline and grace. The Divine vindication of Moses is couched in remarkable words. Moses was proclaimed to be more than a mere prophet: his communications with God were more direct than the visions and dreams which were the ordinary channels of prophecy: "And the

Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

The Divine anger was shown by Miriam being struck with leprosy, "white as snow," from which she was delivered only after Aaron had confessed their sin and by the earnest prayer of Moses himself. Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days, during which the camp remained at Hazeroth, and was then restored.

3. How did Moses act—he who, years before, had felled an Egyptian with one blow of his fist? Did he pour out a torrent of indignation, assuring himself that he had just cause to be angry? Did he show them the door of the tent, and bid them mind their own affairs? Did he in his anger call on God to strike them down? Nothing of the sort. He answered not a word. In his bearing he reminds us of Christ in the judgment-hall, who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again."

It may be well to give some rules for the attainment of this meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.

(1) *Let us claim the meekness of Christ.*—This, of course, was not possible for Moses in the direct way in which it is for us. And yet, doubtless, in his case also there was a constant appeal for heavenly grace. The humility of Jesus did not forbid His proposing Himself as our model for meekness. "Learn of me," He said, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." The likeness of the dove that rested on His head, and the lamb to which He was compared, were the sweet emblems of His heart. And in moments of provocation there is nothing better than to turn to Him and claim His calm, sweet silence, His patience and meekness, saying, "I claim all these, my Lord, for the bitter need of my spirit."

(2) *Let us leave God to vindicate our cause.*—Moses trusted God to vindicate him; and the Almighty God "rode upon a cherub and did fly; yea, he was seen upon the wings of the wind.'

The Lord heard all that was said, and spake suddenly to the three, and told them that whilst He would speak to others in visions and dreams, it was to Moses only that He would speak face to face, so that he might behold Jehovah's form. "Wherefore then," said He, "were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num. xii. 8). This is the secret of rest—to cultivate the habit of handing all over to God, as Hezekiah did when he spread out Sennacherib's letter in the house of the Lord.

(3) *Let us give ourselves to intercessory prayer.*—"Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." When we pray for those who have despitefully used and persecuted us, it is marvellous how soon the soul grows calm and tender. We may begin to do it as a duty, in obedience to the command; we soon discover it to be as snow on a fevered forehead, cooling and soothing the soul. Do not wait to feel an inspiration—act on the sense of what your Lord requires; and as you pray, in the calm and holy presence of God, in the secret where your Father is found, you will find that unworthy thoughts will sink, as silt is precipitated to the river-bed, leaving the stream pellucid and clear.

¶ It was a cold bitter day in December, 1900. We two missionaries sat in a large comfortless room, with two Chinese officials, in the city of Yung P'ing Fu, North China, handing out orders for money and deeds of land which, before our arrival, had been arranged as compensation between Christians who had suffered and Boxers who had persecuted, in the terrible rising of the previous summer. It was a soul-wearying business, for the whole district had been in turmoil for months, and, not to mention smaller losses, thirty-three men, women and children associated with the English Methodist Mission, had died as martyrs for the faith of Jesus.

It had come as a shock to us missionaries on our arrival to learn that a certain sum of money had been already agreed upon as compensation for every life that had been taken, but when it is remembered that in many cases the head of the family had been murdered, and children left unprovided for, the arrangement can, in some measure, be understood. The officials had also expressed their willingness to arrest and punish, according to law, any person who could be proved to have actually committed murder, or actively incited to it. But in not a single case was the extreme penalty demanded, though in two instances, one, where seven

members of one family had perished, and the other, where four had died, the decision was not reached without a severe struggle between the old heathen notions and the new faith.

The finest episode in all the ghastly business was reached when our old Bible-seller, Ho Ju Ching, a tall, noble-looking man wearing on to sixty years of age, stood up before the officials, the missionaries, and the eager crowd of onlookers to receive his share of the compensation. His crops had been destroyed, his home burnt down, he and his family had been fugitives beyond the Great Wall for over three months. Worst of all, his daughter, a bright and bonnie lassie of seventeen, had been cruelly done to death in their own village, by men who were neighbours to them. When asked whether he wished the murderers of his child to be arrested, the old man simply and quietly replied, "No, I do not wish that. I know them every one. They know that I know them, but I shall never seek to have them punished. For what they have done I forgive them as I hope to be forgiven, and I prefer now to leave them to the mercy of God, and pray that they may yet be led to forgiveness and salvation."

Do you wonder that my colleague, who had spent over twenty-five years of his life preaching Christ to the Chinese, should spring from his seat, and cry out triumphantly to the two wondering officials, "That is what Christianity is doing for your people, and for which they have suffered such tortures"?[1]

V.

The Spies.

The Israelites now entered the wilderness of Paran and arrived at Kadesh. From this place the first attempt to enter the Promised Land was to be made. Apparently also Kadesh was the centre of the Israelite occupation during the period of wandering, and it was the starting-point for the final march into Canaan.

Kadesh, or Kadesh-barnea, lay on the south boundary of the Amorite highlands (Deut. i. 19), "in the uttermost border" of Edom (Num. xx. 6). The conquest of Joshua reached thus far; it was therefore on the line, running from the Ascent of Akrabbim to the Brook of Egypt, which marked the southern frontier of Canaan (Num. xxxiv. 4; Josh. xv. 3). In Gen. xx. 1 it is placed

[1] J. Hedlen (English Methodist Mission, Tientsin).

east of Gerar; and in Ezek. xlvii. 19, xlviii. 28 between Tamar and the Brook of Egypt. All this points definitely to the place discovered by the Rev. J. Rowlands in 1842. The ancient name persists in the modern *'Ain Qadis*, "holy spring." An abundant stream rises at the foot of a limestone cliff. Caught by the wells and pools made for its reception, it creates in its brief course, ere it is absorbed by the desert, a stretch of greenery and beauty amid the waste. From the high grazing grounds far and near, the flocks and herds come hither for the watering. The place was visited again by Dr. H. Clay Trumbull, whose book, *Kadesh-Barnea* (1884), contains a full account of the spring and its surroundings. It lies in the territory of the 'Azazine Arabs, about fifty miles south of Beersheba.

1. Before taking action, Moses chose a representative of each of the twelve tribes, and sent them to spy out the land. As the native inhabitants were certainly well aware of the Israelites' intention to attack them, the spies were ordered to go up into the mountain, where they would be less likely to be observed, and to bring back a full report. "See the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, whether they be few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in camps, or in strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not" (Num. xiii. 18–20).

¶ A comparison with Deut. i. shows that the project of sending the spies originated in the people's terror at the near prospect of the fighting which they had known to be impending ever since they left Egypt. Faith finds that nearness diminishes dangers, but sense sees them grow as they approach. The people answered Moses' brave words summoning them to the struggle with this feeble petition for an investigation. They did not honestly say that they were alarmed, but defined the scope of the exploring party's mission as simply to "bring us word again of the way by which we must go up, and the cities unto which we shall come." Had they not the pillar blazing there above them to tell them that? The request was not fathomed in its true faithlessness by Moses, who thought it reasonable and yielded. So far Deuteronomy goes; but this narrative puts another colour on the mission, representing it as the consequence of God's command. The most

eager discoverer of discrepancies in the component parts of the Pentateuch need not press this one into his service, for both sides may be true: the one representing the human feebleness which originated the wish; the other, the Divine compliance with the desire, in order to disclose the unbelief which unfitted the people for the impending struggle, and to educate them by letting them have their foolish way, and taste its bitter results. Putting the two accounts together, we get, not a contradiction, but a complete view, which teaches a large truth as to God's dealings; namely, that He often lovingly lets us have our own way to show us by the issues that His is better, and that daring, which is obedience, is the true prudence.[1]

2. The spies went and returned; they brought great news of the richness of the land, and in sign of this an immense bunch of grapes borne between two on a staff. But there was another side to their tale. It was a land which any one might well be afraid to attack. They had seen cities great and walled up to heaven, their walls towering, as we say, to the sky; the men they had seen were all of a bigger sort than themselves, men of stature; and in particular there were among them some beside whose height and strength the spies looked and felt like pigmies. "There we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." The land was one hard to conquer. But, besides this, it is "a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." It has been, says a modern writer, a land of ruins from the dawn of history, the theatre of successive conquests and destructions. Because good, it had been fought for. It was for many ages the thoroughfare and the prize of the world. It would take fighting to keep.

¶ This temper asserts itself in every department of activity. The prophet of evil insinuates himself into the sphere of commerce, politics, literature, and religion, moaning that things are not well with us, that hope, on our present lines, is untimely and misplaced, and that our best policy is to go back to Egypt, or at least to sit still in the wilderness. Wherever this temper appears, it is an offence to the great God of Hope who has not yet cast off His people, for it is a note of the poltroon and not of the true penitent. Scope for a chastisement which shall humble us there may be, but not for cowardice and despair. This noxious and unbelieving

[1] A. Maclaren.

mood of mind did not die out with the ten spies in the wilderness, but is still endemic in our midst.[1]

3. Only two out of the twelve—Caleb of the tribe of Judah, and Joshua of Ephraim—showed themselves men of faith, and advised an immediate attack on the land. They had apparently taken a truer measure of the state of the Canaanites, who were (as subsequent events proved) not nearly as strong as they looked, being not only divided but much weakened by the continual incursions of the Egyptians. The exhortations of these two were overborne, however, by the voices of the majority.

¶ It is bracing to turn from the creeping prudence which leaves God out of the account to the cheery ring of Caleb's sturdy confidence. His was "a minority report," signed by only two of the "Commission." These two had seen all that the others had, but everything depends on the eyes which look. The others had measured themselves against the trained soldiers and giants, and were in despair. These two measured Amalekites and Anaks against God, and were jubilant. They do not dispute the facts, but they reverse the implied conclusion, because they add the governing fact of God's help. How differently the same facts strike a man who lives by faith and one who lives by calculation![2]

¶ The fact that the ten should set themselves against the two did not arise from intellectual disparity. There is a striking unanimity in the report they brought back, and dissensions begin to appear only when they try to settle upon the policy they will recommend. They were agreed in the survey they had made of the land and in the judgment they passed upon the productiveness of the soil. There was no dispute whatever about the elementary facts which they had noted and brought together. What eye had seen and what ear had heard they related with admirable straightforwardness and accuracy. But the difference was in their interpretation of the facts and the programme it might be wise to follow in the near future. An optimist may lie, especially when he is entering upon the perilous task of special pleading, and a pessimist may also lie, although perhaps not quite so often; but this was not the sin of either the two or the ten. As a body they were quite honest. Caleb and Joshua were not dreamers, nor was their report vitiated by hallucinations. It was a question of religion that separated them from their colleagues and brought them into violent collision. They looked at the problem from the

[1] T. G. Selby, *The God of the Patriarchs*, 238. [2] A. Maclaren.

view-point of God's Covenant, and thought of themselves as links in a firmly welded chain of providential decrees.[1]

4. It is not much wonder that the news daunted the people. They were thoroughly frightened. They were a young people, only a year or two out of bondage. They had had the great deliverance of the Red Sea to encourage them; but their fears might tell them that that had been a stroke of good fortune on which they could not reckon again. And now, in their deep depression, there rose again that thought—Egypt; as before their hunger had said, Egypt with its flesh-pots rather than this light bread, so now their fears said, Egypt, where at least we were safe, where we could live, though it was in bondage, rather than this hopeless fight against the castles and the giants, with certain death. Better, indeed, to have died before they began this hopeless journey. "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword? And they said one to another, Let us make us a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

(1) Note the *faithless cowards.*—The gravity of the revolt here is partly in its universality, which is emphasized in the narrative at every turn: "*all* the congregation" (ver. 1), "*all* the children of Israel," "the *whole* congregation" (ver. 2), "*all* the assembly of the congregation" (which implies a solemn formal convocation), "*all* the company" (ver. 7), "*all* the congregation," "*all* the children of Israel" (ver. 10). It was no sectional discontent, but full-blown and universal rebellion. The narrative draws a distinction between the language addressed to Moses and the whisperings to one another. Publicly, the unanimous voice suggested the return to Egypt as an alternative for discussion, and put it before Moses; to one another they muttered the proposal, which no man had yet courage to speak out, of choosing a new leader, and going back, whatever became of Moses. That could only mean murder as well as mutiny. The whispers would soon be loud enough.

(2) Note the *short memory and churlish unthankfulness of unbelief.*—It has been often objected to the story of the Exodus, that such extremity of folly as is ascribed to the Israelites is

[1] T. G. Selby, *The God of the Patriarchs*, 240.

inconceivable in such circumstances. How could men, with all these miracles in mind, and manna falling daily, and the pillar blazing every night, and the roll of Sinai's thunders scarcely out of their ears, behave thus? But any one who has honestly studied his own heart, and known its capacity for neglecting the plainest indications of God's presence, and forgetting the gifts of His love, will believe the story, and see brethren in these Israelites.

(3) Note the *credulity of unbelief.*—The word of Jehovah had told them that the land "flowed with milk and honey," and that they were sure to conquer it. They would not believe Him unless they had verification of His promises. And when they got their own fears reflected in the multiplying mirror of the spies' report, they took men's words for gospel, and gave to them, without examination or qualification, a credence which they had never given to God.

(4) Note the *bad bargain which unbelief is ready to make.*—They contemplated a risky alternative to the brave dash against Canaan. There would be quite as much peril in going back as forward. The march from Egypt had not been so easy; but what would it be when there were no Moses, no Jethro, no manna, no pillar? And what sort of reception would await them in Egypt and what fate befall them there? In front, there were perils; but God would be with them. They would have to fight their way, but with the joyous feeling that victory was sure, and that every blow struck, and every step marched, brought them nearer triumphant peace. If they turned, every step would carry them farther from their hopes, and nearer the dreary putting on of the old yoke, which "neither they nor their fathers were able to bear." They would buy slavery at as dear a price as they would have to pay for freedom and wealth.

5. This climax of faithlessness and rebellion was followed immediately by a Divine judgment. "The glory of the Lord appeared"; again, as at Sinai, the total destruction of Israel was threatened, and again also Moses stood forth in the power of intercession, rejecting the offer to make a great nation of his family alone, and pleading the former revelations of God's mercy and forgiveness from Egypt onwards. The prayer was effectual—

"I have pardoned according to thy word"; but this time the punishment must be endured. None of the existing generation of warriors, from twenty years old and upwards, except Caleb and Joshua, should see the Land of Promise. Their carcases should fall in the wilderness, and only their children, after forty years' wandering, should enter in, and know the land which their fathers had despised.

¶ The temper of the spies deserves the punishment afterwards meted out to it, because it despises the Divine power and forgets the signs and wonders of the past. The God of the called and chosen people was looked upon as though He counted for no more in the government of the world than the dumb idols of effete and condemned races. These ten reactionaries lost heart as they stood upon the threshold of a new history, and treated the Redeemer of the high hand and the outstretched arm as though He were a mere cypher in the world He had made.[1]

Oh thou of dark forebodings drear,
Oh thou of such a faithless heart,
Hast thou forgotten what thou art,
That thou hast ventured so to fear?

No weed on ocean's bosom cast,
Borne by its never-resting foam
This way and that, without a home,
Till flung on some bleak shore at last:

But thou the lotus, which above
Swayed here and there by wind and tide,
Yet still below doth fixed abide,
Fast rooted in the eternal Love.[2]

[1] T. G. Selby, *The God of the Patriarchs*, 243.
[2] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 222.

MOSES.

XII.

From Kadesh to Moab.

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From Kadesh to Moab.

The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.—Num. xxi. 4.

1. Of the period which followed the abortive attempt to enter Canaan, the history is obscure in the extreme. The length of time that elapsed between the Exodus and the final invasion of Canaan is conventionally represented as forty years (Num. xiv. 34; cf. xxxiii. 38), which is presumably regarded as the equivalent of a generation. In the narrative which has been preserved two or more records appear to be fused together, and a consistent account is practically impossible. It seems probable, on the whole, that Kadesh was the centre round which the movements of the Israelites turned. The place was, as its name indicates, a sanctuary, and possessed a supply of water; and though doubtless the people left it from time to time in search of pasture for their flocks, they remained in its neighbourhood.

The duration of the sojourn in Kadesh is nowhere definitely stated, and the various passages relating to it point to different conclusions. After the discontent which followed upon the report of the spies, the people were bidden to turn to the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea, *i.e.*, to the Gulf of Akabah (Num. xiv. 25); and in Deut. i. 46 it is said that after "many days" had been spent at Kadesh they wandered for thirty-eight years around the border of Edom (ii. 1, 14). On the other hand, it is affirmed in Num. xx. 1, 14, 22, that Kadesh, at the close of the forty years' wanderings, was the starting-point for the final march into Canaan; and this appears the most plausible of the conflicting representations.

¶ The next thirty-eight years are a mysterious and unrecorded period in the history of Israel, a period of waiting and Divine discipline. A number of obscure halting-places are recorded in Num. xxxiii. 18–36. The mass of the people must have pursued

their ordinary pastoral occupation, perhaps assembling at times before the sanctuary. The later prophets speak of the neglect of the Sabbath and of sacrifice, and allude to idolatrous practices (Ezek. xx. and Amos v. 25, 26). Circumcision was not practised (Josh. v.). Nevertheless, on the whole, it must have been a time of education, during which some of the lessons of Moses' revelation were assimilated; analogous to the Captivity in Babylon at a later time. Jewish tradition ascribed Ps. xc. to the authorship of Moses during this period (see title).

The transitoriness and vanity of human life, God's judgments, and the steadfastness of His purpose; the hope that generations to come will profit by the labours and sufferings of their father's faith—these thoughts may well have been in the mind of the great lawgiver in this last sad period of his life, whether the splendid words of the Psalm are his or not.[1]

2. By a re-arrangement of the text, however, Wiener believes that the narratives may be brought into harmony. He understands that the thirty-eight years of which so little is recorded were spent, not in or near Kadesh, but in the journey round the borders of Edom towards Moab and the Promised Land. "After leaving Sinai," he says, "the Israelites proceeded by leisurely stages to Kadesh-barnea. We have no information as to the reason for their consuming many months on the journey, but it may have been partly for purposes of discipline and organization. In the early spring of the third year they reached Kadesh-barnea, south of the Negeb. From this base of operations they could pursue either of two lines of invasion. They could traverse the land of Edom laterally, and operate from the east, or they could invade the Negeb by marching due north from their base. The first alternative required the consent of the Edomites. This was sought and refused. The second alternative was then attempted. Either before or during or after the negotiations with Edom, a campaign was actually waged in the Negeb, resulting in the defeat of the king of Arad, and spies were sent out to explore the country. But, on hearing their report, the people lost heart, and it became clear that success could not be expected until a new generation had grown up. The order was therefore given to evacuate Kadesh and compass the land of Edom. But the people suddenly veered round and refused to obey. In defiance of the

[1] A. R. Whitham, *Old Testament History*, 130.

Divine command they embarked on a campaign of conquest. The result was disastrous. They were utterly routed and chased to Hormah, the scene of their former triumph.

"The defeat at Hormah must have put an end once for all to the hopes of invading Canaan successfully from the south, and may have entailed casualties that involved delaying the departure from Kadesh. It appears to have had immediate results within the Israelitish camp, for dissatisfaction at the failure to conquer Canaan seems to have been partly responsible for the conduct of Dathan and Abiram: 'Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards.' Then came the failure of the water and the incident of striking the rock.

"At the end of a stay that lasted some months in all, the Israelites left Kadesh by the way to the Red Sea, and never returned to it during the period of the wanderings. Then followed the long weary circling of the land of Edom, and at the end of this period, on the journey northwards from Ezion-geber, Aaron died at some point near the eastern or south-eastern frontier of Edom in the fortieth year."[1]

3. The chief events that now remain to be recorded are (1) the rebellions of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Num. xvi., xviii.), and the death of Miriam (Num. xx. i.); (2) Edom's refusal of a passage (Num. xx. 14–21); (3) the death of Aaron (Num. xx. 22–29); (4) the visitation of fiery serpents (Num. xxi. 4-9); (5) the song of the well (Num. xxi. 16–18), and the victory over Sihon (Num. xxi. 21–30); (6) the story of Balaam (Num. xxii.–xxiv.). All these incidents may be touched upon except the last, which is dealt with under Balaam's own name.

i. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

The account in the Book of Numbers implies that with a civil rebellion against the authority of the lawgiver was combined a religious revolt against the influence of the Aaronic priesthood. The revolt against Moses was led by Dathan and Abiram, of the tribe of Reuben. As members of the oldest tribe they resented his

[1] H. M. Wiener, *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism*, 133.

supremacy, and rudely reproached him with his unfitness for the leadership. Their rebellion was fearfully punished. The earth "clave asunder" under them and "swallowed them up" with their wives and children. Korah, on the other hand, demanded on behalf of the whole tribe of Levi, to which Moses and Aaron belonged, the right to exercise priestly functions. His adherents, however, who had presumed to offer incense upon the sacred altar, brought upon themselves speedy retribution.

¶ The account of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram seems to contain three narratives :—

(1) Dathan and Abiram, sons of Reuben, rebel against the civil authority of Moses, who wishes (as they allege) to make himself a prince. For this they and their households are swallowed up (JE).

(2) Korah and two hundred and fifty princes rebel against Moses and Aaron in the interests of the people at large as opposed to the monopoly of the tribe of Levi (P).

(3) An independent Priestly account relates how two hundred and fifty Levites rebelled against Aaron's priestly authority.

In Num. xxvi. 11, alluding to the death of Dathan and Abiram in company with Korah, there is the statement "Notwithstanding the sons of Korah died not." They became in fact an influential guild of musicians in the second Temple.[1]

1. The revolt against the secular authority of Moses was organized by three Reubenites, Dathan, Abiram, and On, who contended that Moses had brought the people out of a bountiful land into the wilderness under false pretences, and was endeavouring to make himself a king over them. Moses vehemently protested his innocence of any act of oppression, and bade the people separate themselves from the mutineers, appealing to the doom that he asserted would befall them to vindicate his claims and his position. The narrative relates that his anticipations were verified, and that Dathan and Abiram, with their families, were swallowed up by an earthquake as they stood at the door of their tents.

¶ A widespread rebellion, an organized rebellion, not homogeneous, but with many elements in it tending to utter confusion, is what we see. Suppose it to have succeeded, the unity of

[1] F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Biblical History of the Hebrews*, 380.

worship would have been destroyed completely. Each tribe with its own *cultus* would have gone its own way so far as religion was concerned. In a very short time there would have been as many debased cults as there were wandering companies. Futile attempts at conquest, strife or alliance with neighbouring peoples, internal dissension, would have worn the tribes piecemeal away. The dictatorship of Moses, the Aaronic priesthood, and the unity of worship stood or fell together. One of the three removed, the others would have given way. But the revolutionary spirit, springing out of ambition and a disaffection for which there was no excuse, was blind to consequences. And the stern suppression of this revolt, at whatever cost, was absolutely needful if there was to be any future for Israel.[1]

2. Korah's rebellion was directed against the superior religious authority enjoyed by Moses and Aaron together over other Levites. He and his partisans (250 men) were challenged by Moses to approach the tabernacle and offer incense, it being left to Jehovah to decide whether they or Aaron should be His chosen ministers. They did so, and were destroyed by fire. The censers which they used were made into plates for covering the altar, to serve as a reminder that none but members of the house of Aaron might burn incense before Jehovah (Num. xvi. 40). On the morrow, however, the people charged Moses and Aaron with causing the death of their fellow-countrymen; whereupon a plague broke out in which 14,700 persons perished, and which was stayed only by Aaron standing with a censer of incense between the dead and the living to make atonement (Num. xvi. 41–50). After this, to still such complaints for the future, Moses was bidden to lay up in the tent of meeting twelve rods, each inscribed with the name of one of the tribes, Aaron's name being written on the rod of Levi. The next morning Aaron's rod was found to have borne almonds; and as a token of Jehovah's choice, his rod was preserved before the Testimony.

In this sacred position, the miraculous rod was a most significant symbol to all generations of the danger of worshipping God wilfully and presumptuously in any other way than that which He Himself had appointed, and of the blessedness of the service rendered in accordance with His will. It also declared in that holy place the great truth, everywhere and at all times

[1] R. A. Watson, *The Book of Numbers*, 202.

true—that the whole significance and worth of religious worship depend upon the fact that it is of Divine appointment; that it is an expression not of man's yearning after God, but of God's yearning after man—an expression of God's own gracious will, that the creature who had rebelled against Him should have access to the Divine presence. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son; today have I begotten thee."

¶ The rod that blossomed, we infer from the narrative, was a branch of an almond-tree. This was an appropriate feature of the symbol. By the Jews this tree has always been regarded with reverence, the English Jews, even at the present day, carrying on their great festivals a bough of flowering almond to the synagogue —just as of old their ancestors presented palm branches in the temple. Its Hebrew name of *shaked*, or "the waker," was applied to it because in Palestine it is the first tree that awakes from the sleep of winter. Hence the beautiful poetic allusion of Jeremiah—"The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond-tree. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will *hasten* my word to perform it." Its snowy blossoms appear on the bare branches before the leaves—like the common sloe of this country—as early as January, and are regarded by the people as welcome harbingers of the spring.[1]

¶ As representing the princes of Israel, the almond-rod seems to have implied that, as this tree precedes all other trees in forming its blossoms and fruit, and thus hastening to accomplish the ends of its existence, so these princes stood out conspicuous as examples of all the national virtues. They took precedence of the people in rank and excellence, and therefore each of them might be deemed worthy of ministering before the Lord in behalf of Israel. And yet the almond-rod of Aaron alone fulfilled miraculously the natural characteristics of the tree, and attained its true ideal; while all the other rods, though placed in precisely the same circumstances, remained dormant. The Divine priesthood of Aaron and Levi was the only "waker" out of the everlasting winter sleep that had overtaken the false, presumptuous human priesthood of the other princes and tribes, for it alone had the true abiding life in it.[2]

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Garden and the City*, 109.
[2] H. Macmillan, *Ibid.*, 110.

Say, was it the sigh of the southern gale
That flushed the almond bough?—
Ever brightest and first spring-time to hail,
It needs soft winds, I trow.

Say, was it the sunshine that woke its flowers
With a kindling look of love?
For, far and deep within, through coldest bowers,
Can gleam smiles from above.

Not so, nor so—away from breeze and light
Was shut the sapless rod;
But in stillness it felt a secret might—
Thrilled to the breath of God.[1]

3. Sorrow and chastisement marked the march from its outset. Before the armies moved from Kadesh, Miriam, the elder sister of Moses, died, and was buried. "Miriam died there and was buried there," in one of the rock-hewn tombs which perforate the whole range of the hills surrounding Petra; it may be, in that secluded spot still known by the sacred name of the "Convent," still scaled by the long ascent cut out of the rock for the approach of pilgrims in ages beyond the reach of history. The mourning for her death, according to Josephus, lasted for thirty days, and was terminated by the ceremony which remained to the last days of the commonwealth, the sacrifice of the red heifer, as if in special allusion to the departed prophetess.

ii. Edom's Churlishness.

The shortest way to reach the fords of Jordan would have been to pass through the mountain defiles of the country of Edom. This would, however, be impossible if the inhabitants offered resistance, and a request was sent to the king of Edom, on the grounds of ancient brotherhood, and of the Divine call to proceed to Canaan. Moses proposed to go by "the king's way" (probably the Wady Ghuweir) without trespassing, and paying even for the water which the host might require.

1. The country occupied by Edom extended from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Akabah and comprised what is now known as

[1] Felicia D. Hemans.

the Wady El-Arabah. Edom, at this time a beautiful and extremely fertile district, was held by a warlike race well able to protect the country from invasion. The Israelites evidently wanted to enter Edom at Petra, and to make their way across the Arabah and by one of its eastern valleys leading to the present pilgrim route from Damascus. An embassy was accordingly sent to the king of Edom "informing him how God had delivered his brother Israel" from Egypt, and asking him for permission to pass through his land. "We will not," so ran the request of the Israelites, "pass through field or through vineyard, neither will we drink of the water of the wells; we will go along the king's highway, we will not turn aside to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy border."

¶ The King's highway was the public road constructed at the cost of the State for the King and his armies to use, and is said to be the same as the old broad military roads still found here and there in the East, and known as the "Sultan" or "Emperor road."[1]

2. The request was refused. Not only so, but the king of Edom assembled so formidable an army to resist any attempt to cross his territory that the only way open to Israel was to turn southward to the Gulf of Akabah, and from thence to reach their destination by the eastern border of Edom.

¶ The world has all along been refusing to let Christ through. It has never had room for Him within the inn; it has relegated Him to the manger. It wants Him to be kept apart. It is willing to visit Him occasionally in the manger—even, at times, to bring a little gold and frankincense. But it does not wish Him to become a force in its own affairs. Why so; what is it afraid of? The same thing which Edom feared. Edom was afraid that the hordes of Israel would tear up her cultivated fields and destroy her national produce. The world fears that Christ will tear up human instincts and make men unnatural. The world is wrong; we are never so natural as when we are Christians. What kills naturalness is self-consciousness; it makes us either too confident or too shy. When I am too confident I am thinking about myself; when I am too shy I am equally thinking about myself. In both cases the mirror of myself is the prominent thing. What will break the mirror? A larger environment.

[1] S. Singer.

Why are travelled people so nice? It is because they are so natural. And why are they so natural? It is because their eyes have rested on a wider sphere. They have forgot their own greatness; they have forgot their own humility; they have forgot to think about themselves at all—they have smashed their mirror.

iii. The Death of Aaron.

1. After the message was dispatched to Edom, the people advanced as far as the frontier, and halted near Mount Hor, in the neighbourhood of the great fortress of Petra, to await the reply of the Edomites. Here Moses, by Jehovah's command, took Aaron and his son Eleazar up the mountain, and after Eleazar had been invested with the insignia of the priesthood, Aaron "died there in the top of the mount," and was mourned by Israel for thirty days.

¶ "And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount" (Num. xx. 28). In these calm, almost cold, words is told all that man is to know of an event full of interest, full of mystery, full of awe. That old man who has gone up into Mount Hor, under Divine direction, to die, is God's High Priest; the first of a long line, the only line that God ever consecrated, to stand between Himself and His chosen people, in the things of religion and of the soul, until He should at last come, who is the End of all Revelation and the Antitype of all Priesthood.[2]

¶ Severe simplicity characterizes the authors of the Bible; they rarely add any observations of their own, and narrate the most pathetic and weighty events without stating their private impressions. Their conciseness often disappoints our natural curiosity. The historical facts are recited without high rhetorical finish, and usually without betraying the bias of the writer. The account of the death of Aaron is a case in point. It was a scene of impressive solemnity, yet it is given in a cool, unimpassioned manner, and shows no effort to rouse feeling or make a dramatic exhibition.[3]

[1] G. Matheson, *Times of Retirement*, 71.
[2] C. J. Vaughan, *The Presence of God in His Temple*, 127.
[3] J. S. Jones, *The Invisible Things*, 204.

2. What are the lessons for us in the death of Aaron?

(1) *The nearness of God.*—The record attributes Aaron's death to the error of Moses in smiting the rock at Meribah for the thirsty Israelites, instead of simply speaking, as the order ran. True, Aaron was only accessory to that transaction, and not the chief actor. It was Moses who evinced some quite natural ill-temper at the peevish discontent of the people; but Aaron was present and doubtless sympathized with his brother's impatience and disgust over the situation; at any rate, this is the reason assigned for his exclusion from Canaan. Everywhere the Old Testament insists upon the idea of a presiding God, and now and then the curtain is lifted and His voice is heard; He thunders out of heaven upon the chosen people, He discloses Himself in some act or occurrence of a miraculous kind, He becomes the author of a sudden calamity or of a universal blessing. Here in this narrative touching Aaron, God is brought actively and audibly upon the scene; He says to Moses, "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter the land which I have given unto the children of Israel."

(2) *The solidarity of men.*—There is a unity or community of interests and suffering among men, so that often they stand or fall together. Human beings are like tourists climbing the Alps, roped one to the other. If one falls, he imperils others; if one slips and goes down the abyss, he may drag the rest with him. So in life at large; whatever we may think of the equities of the case, it is unquestionably true that, owing to proximity, contact, kinship, we bear one another's burdens and inherit either advantage or trouble. As the world is arranged, the innocent often suffer with the guilty, and the mere accident of relationship sometimes leads to inconvenient consequences. Conversely, a person is often advantaged by what looks like blind luck or the force of favouring circumstances without active co-operation on his part, or any special virtue or merit in him. This is among the standing paradoxes—no new thing, but old as human society. The Hebrews murmured at Meribah, and Aaron was numbered among them and lost the Promised Land.

(3) *The survival of service.*—What each human generation holds is only a life trust. As when Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them upon Eleazar his son—taking the pure

linen, his official dress, and enfolding Eleazar with it, decking his brow with the mitre, transferring to him all the insignia of the high priesthood—so is it in the larger history of mankind. Life is not a stagnant pool; it is a running river, into which new men, new measures, new methods, new manners, new hopes and energies, evermore flow. It is an overwhelming thought, that of the future and its developments. Who would not like to see the map of the world and know its opinions and customs one hundred years hence? How will it handle the perennial problems that have vexed all centuries? We cannot guess. This only is certain, that Aaron will make way for Eleazar. Your son will take your place. It would not answer that men should live for ever under the present order, they would grow obstinate, obstructive; and hence when habit becomes fixed and character formed, and opinion matured, the individual lingers a little longer to do his work and add his mite to the world's sum, and then is retired. His influence lives and widens like a ripple; it is not utterly effaced, but tells upon the future in unsuspected ways, and so the total impression made by one's character is silently propagated. There is such a thing undoubtedly as the transmission of influence and of the fruits of a great example. Thus Moses' Decalogue lies at the base of subsequent legislation—he has not perished; and the Levitical priesthood has furnished the type for elaborate, hierarchical churches. Aaron dies, but not his work. The past with its populations is asleep, but the truths it held and its relation to the larger life of the world still survive.

iv. The Fiery Serpents.

1. The journey southwards towards the sea was very difficult and trying; it lay through the southern part of the Arabah, a barren district of loose sand and stones, subject to sand-storms and infested with serpents. Murmuring again arose about the absence of food and water, and the unsatisfying character of the manna—"our soul loatheth this light bread."

The mutinous discontent of the Israelites had some excuse when they had to wheel round once more and go southwards in consequence of the refusal of passage through Edom. The valley which stretches from the Dead Sea to the head of the eastern arm

of the Red Sea, down which they had to plod in order to turn the southern end of the mountains on its east side, and then resume their northern march outside the territory of Edom, is described as a "horrible desert." Certainly it yielded neither bread nor water. So the faithless pilgrims broke into their only too familiar murmurings, utterly ignoring their thirty-eight years of preservation.

Murmuring brought punishment, which was meant for amendment. "The Lord sent fiery serpents." That statement does not necessarily imply a miracle. Scripture traces natural phenomena directly to God's will, and often overleaps intervening material links between the cause which is God and the effect which is a physical fact. The neighbourhood of Elath at the head of the gulf is still infested with venomous serpents, "marked with fiery red spots," from which, or possibly from the inflammation caused by their poison, they are here called "fiery."

¶ The snakes against which the brazen serpent was originally raised as a protection were peculiar to the eastern portion of the Sinaitic desert. There and nowhere else, and in no other moment of their history, could this symbol have originated.[1]

2. The swift stroke had fallen without warning or voice to interpret it, but the people knew in their hearts whence and why it had come. Their quick recognition of its source and purpose, and their swift repentance, are to be put to their credit. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. xxi. 7–9).

The notion that such a plague could be removed by making and offering an image of serpents fell in easily with the primitive notions of the people. There is a story in the First Book of Samuel which points in this direction. When the ark brought

[1] A. P. Stanley, *History of the Jewish Church*, i. 162.

plagues of mice upon the Philistines who had detained it, and they were anxious to propitiate the offended Deity of Israel, they were told to make and offer five golden mice, one for each of the Philistine cities, and thus to secure relief from their distress. By a similar collocation of ideas a brazen serpent would be an effective propitiation to the Deity which had sent a visitation of serpents. We have to remember that the mind of primitive worshippers is not to be interpreted by modern parallels. What seems grotesque to us, seemed reasonable to our religious ancestors. The popular worship of the brazen serpent clothed itself in orthodox theory, just as the popular worship of the pagan deities in Christendom successfully disguised itself under the cultus of the saints. This story in the Book of Numbers is the official justification for the image in the Temple.

The serpent of brass that Moses had "made" was long cherished as a sacred image in the sanctuaries of Judah and Jerusalem. Incense was offered to it, and a name conferred on it, and even after its destruction by Hezekiah the recollection of it was still so endeared to the nation that from it was drawn one of the most sacred similitudes of the New Testament; and the Christian Church itself claimed for centuries to have preserved its very form intact in the Church of St. Ambrose, at Milan.

¶ The singularity of the remedy provided for the plague of serpents under which the Israelites were suffering consisted in this, that it resembled the disease. Serpents were destroying them, and from this destruction they were saved by a serpent. This special mode of cure was obviously not chosen without a reason. To those among them who were instructed in the symbolic learning of Egypt there might be in this image a significance which is lost to us. From the earliest times the serpent had been regarded as man's most dangerous enemy—more subtle than any beast of the field, more sudden and stealthy in its attack, and more certainly fatal. The natural revulsion which men feel in its presence, and their inability to cope with it, seemed to fit it to be the natural representative of the powers of spiritual evil. And yet, strangely enough, in the very countries in which it was recognized as the symbol of all that is deadly, it was also recognized as the symbol of life. Having none of the ordinary members or weapons of the wilder lower creatures, it was yet more agile and formidable than any of them; and, casting its skin annually, it seemed to renew itself with eternal youth. And as it

was early discovered that the most valuable medicines are poisons, the serpent, as the very "personification of poison," was looked upon as not only the symbol of all that is deadly, but also of all that is health-giving. And so it has continued to be, even to our own days, the recognized symbol of the healing art, and, wreathed round a staff, as Moses had it, it may still be seen sculptured on our own hospitals and schools of medicine.[1]

3. Jesus Christ has bidden us find in this strange story a luminous teaching about Himself, and we are relieved from all embarrassments of the old literal interpretation by His high authority. What, then, does the symbolism of the brazen serpent teach us about Christ? Two lessons lie on the surface. First, Christ was to be conspicuously set before men as the Divine Saviour from sin. Next, having been thus presented, He was to prove Himself to all who looked to Him in faith the power of deliverance. The "lifting up" of the Son of man figured the Crucifixion; and the healing of the serpent-bitten Israelites who looked in faith to the "token of salvation" which Moses had set up in their midst was a picture of the moral release which believers in the Crucified would surely experience.

And this healing power of Christ has been verified in human experience. We know whose voice whispered Divine forgiveness, if only we would not cease from the fight with sin; whose love was upon us as a Divine coercion compelling us to strive afresh. From this vantage ground of our own experience we look out on the scenes of moral conflict, and we see that in all directions this Divine Person who has been in contact with us has been doing as much for our brethren. The accordant testimonies of our fellow-believers justify and confirm the halting verdict of our own hearts. We were not mistaken; we read the riddle of our hearts aright; it was Christ who worked in us and with us throughout: we know Him whom we have believed:—

> I know Thee, who hast kept my path, and made
> Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
> So that it reached me like a solemn joy:
> It were too strange that I should doubt Thy love.

¶ That which Moses lifted up for the healing of the Israelites was a likeness, not of those who were suffering, but of that from

[1] Marcus Dods, *The Gospel of St. John*, 122.

which they were suffering. It was an image, not of the swollen limbs and discoloured face of the serpent-bitten, but of the serpents that poisoned them. It was this image, representing as slain and harmless the creature which was destroying them, which became the remedy for the pains it inflicted. Similarly, our Lord instructs us to see in the cross not so much our own nature suffering the extreme agony and then hanging lifeless as sin suspended harmless and dead there. All the virus seemed to be extracted from the fiery, burning fangs of the snakes, and hung up innocuous in that brazen serpent; so all the virulence and venom of sin, all that is dangerous and deadly in it, our Lord bids us believe is absorbed in His person and rendered harmless on the cross. With this representation the language of Paul perfectly agrees. God, he tells us, "made Christ to be sin for us." It is strong language; yet, no language that fell short of this would satisfy the symbol.[1]

v. The Song of the Well.

When the weary travellers reached the border of Moab, the following halting-places are recorded in the Book of Numbers. (1) Oboth and Iye-abarim, "in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sunrising," (2) the valley of Zered, (3) the river Arnon, "the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites." "Wherefore it is said in the book of the Wars of the Lord:—

Vaheb in Suphah
And the valleys of Arnon,
And the slope of the valleys
That inclineth toward the dwelling of Ar,
And leaneth upon the border of Moab" (Num. xxi. 15).

(4) Beer (a well), so called because here water was obtained by the labour of the people, in which their chiefs heartily joined. A short poem commemorates the event.

Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:
The well, which the princes digged,
Which the nobles of the people delved,
With the sceptre, and with their staves.

1. In Eastern life there is no drudgery worse than that of drawing water. "Hewers of wood and drawers of water" is the Bible's description of slaves of the lowest class. You read the

[1] Marcus Dods, *The Gospel of St. John*, 123.

proof on the lips of the well itself, where the soft ropes dragged daily through the centuries have cut deep into the stone; and again on the lined faces of the daughters of the people, as they gather to their task. Eliezer of Damascus found a bride at the well, but that was in the morning of the world. She whom Christ encountered was a drudge, whose first prayer to Him was: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw." The tramp to the well, the frequent quarrel for one's turn, the strain to lift the bucket from the deep pool, the climb home again with the high, full jar on the head—it is all a constant weariness and almost unrelieved. For in the East, women while at work seldom or never sing.

Where men address themselves to the task, as shepherds have to do, they often sing; and their singing is sometimes of the kind which glorifies their labour with memory and with hope. Such an effort we find in the song before us. It is one of the most ancient pieces of Scripture; but long before it became Scripture it had descended, perhaps through many generations, on the lips of labour, in the open air and sunshine, where the gravel rattles under the feet of the shepherds, in the places of drawing water. Wherever the well may have been at whose starting this song was first sung, the verses were probably handed down through the daily routine of many wells. In Palestine there are watering-places which are at once fountains and cisterns. A deep shaft has been sunk near some dry torrent bed to release the underground waters: and though the water lives and leaps below, a long pull is required to bring it to the surface. The drawers who sang this song knew that their well was alive. They called to each other to sing back to it: the verb means to sing in antiphon, to answer the music of the waters with their own. That spirit in the dark hollow was not the only well-spring; the men's hearts gushed back to it, fountain called to fountain,

Spring up, O well! Sing ye back to it.

And the human music is worthy of the other. It recalls that condition of life which is ideal, to which nations look back as their golden age, to which a living Church looks forward as part of the coming Kingdom of the Father, men of all ranks as brothers, and sharing the work which is indispensable to the common weal.

2. One day, ten or twelve years ago, Professor Budde of Strassburg was bending over his Hebrew Bible; and he made a discovery. He was reading the "Song of the Well" in the Book of Numbers, a song which is among the oldest in the world. Suddenly God showed him that He had more truth and light yet to break forth out of His Holy Word for those who come to it with teachable and eager hearts.

"From the wilderness they went to Mattanah"—these were the words over which Professor Budde halted. This term which is translated "the wilderness," he said to himself, might with equal accuracy be regarded as a proper name—"Midbar": From Midbar to Mattanah. But, he argued, if, instead of inserting in the narrative the geographical name Midbar, you prefer the phrase which gives you the name's significance, why should you not deal in the same manner with the next geographical name—"Mattanah"? Mattanah, too, has its meaning. It means "a gift." Let these words displace the topographical title, and you will read, "From the wilderness a gift." But that is rippling and musical poetry instead of the bald and work-a-day prose which describes the route chosen by the caravan of wayfarers. So our scholar comes to the conclusion that here we have really the last line of the "Song of the Well." To complete the parallelism the Song ought to have six lines instead of five. As it stands at present, the first two and the second two run well together, but the fifth swings in the air alone. Let a sixth be added, and all will go happily:

Spring up, O Well!
Sing ye to it,
Thou Well dug by princes,
Sunk by the nobles of the people,
With the sceptre, with their staves:
Out of the desert a gift.

"Out of the desert a gift": it is a beautiful ending to the little psalm; it is sweeter, nobler, more memorable than "From Midbar to Mattanah." And it is a message to us even to-day—a message from the Arabian sand-plains to our Western civilization, and from that old pre-Christian age to our modern time. It is a remembrancer of cool waters and leaping fountains which will assuage our need.

3. The Israelites were now at length in a territory comparatively well-watered and fertile; but their advance was threatened by the hostility of the Amorite chief Sihon, who had apparently made an incursion into the territories of Moab and Ammon, and established a powerful kingdom with Heshbon as its centre. At this point therefore the Israelites were once more engaged in fierce warfare. Sihon not only refused them a passage through his territory, but resisted their further advance by force of arms. A decisive campaign ensued. Sihon was slain in battle, and his land from Arnon unto Jabbok fell into the hands of the Israelites. The capture of Heshbon, Sihon's stronghold, was celebrated in another ancient war-song, of which we perhaps possess a fragment in Num. xxi. 27 ff. This success was followed by the overthrow of Og, the king of Bashan, an Amorite chief who had seized on a tract of territory north of the Jabbok, and had fixed his capital at Edrei. By this conquest the Israelites gained possession of the greater part of Gilead. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, were allowed to occupy the conquered district (which was luxuriantly fertile, and well-suited for the grazing of cattle), on condition of their duly assisting the other tribes to subdue the territory west of Jordan. A firm footing had now been secured by the invaders on the eastern side of the Jordan valley. In the plains of Moab opposite to the city of Jericho the main body of the Israelites was securely encamped. Their rapid and decisive conquests had naturally struck terror into the Moabites, who apparently abstained from any hostile action, and allowed the invaders a free right of passage through their territory. In his alarm and perplexity Balak, the king of Moab, sent an embassy to Balaam, a famous eastern soothsayer who dwelt at Pethor on the Euphrates, imploring him to come and pronounce a curse (*i.e.* cast some malignant spell) upon the Israelites. The account of this episode is very remarkable though somewhat obscure and contradictory in minor details. The mention of the elders of Midian seems to imply that Moab was at this time partially occupied, as in later times, by hordes of Midianites. We are told that the Israelites were seduced from their allegiance to Jehovah not only by the attractions of the licentious worship offered to the Moabitish deity Baal-peor, but by the wiles of the Midianites (Num. xxv. 18). The wrath of

Jehovah fell heavily on the camp of the Israelites, and it was only the righteous zeal of Phinehas the priest that saved them from utter destruction. A speedy and overwhelming vengeance overtook the Midianites. Twelve thousand men of Israel led by Phinehas, and accompanied by the vessels of the sanctuary (*i.e.* the ark), fell upon the host of Midian; the five chieftains were slain, and Balaam himself, who had counselled the Midianites to ensnare Israel into idolatry, perished in battle. The encampments and villages of the tribe were destroyed and the remnant which escaped the sword driven back into the desert.

¶ Phinehas was one of the most prominent of those typical personages whose character and mission presented features of resemblance to the expected Messiah. He did the work of his own day faithfully, and without any ulterior purpose; but he was at the same time unconsciously representing, in his own degree, Him who was to come in the fulness of time and the fulness of blessing. Faint and weak, indeed, in him are the lineaments which in the Messiah shine forth in surpassing glory; but they are as faithful a likeness as a type can ever bear to its archetype. His functions and offices distinctly anticipated those of the Saviour. As the high-priest of Israel, he silently testified of the great High-priest of mankind. As the warrior, conquering the enemies and preserving the unity of his people, he witnessed for that Warrior who was to gird His sword upon His thigh, and to ride prosperously because of meekness and truth and righteousness, and who, moreover, was to gather the dispersed of Israel into one, and to bring Jew and Gentile, bond and free, to one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Nor was the personal character of Phinehas unlike that of Him whom he typified. The warrior-priest of Israel had that warmth and tenderness of heart which, like the summer-cloud hiding in its woolly folds the fierce destructive lightning, is often combined with an unsparing hatred of what is evil. All the recorded incidents of his life show touches of pitying gentleness gilding the wild gloom of their vengeance. And in this respect he represented Him who wept with the sorrowing sisters of Bethany, and launched the most withering invectives against the vile hypocrisies of the Scribes and Pharisees; who reconciled the extremes of universal excellence, and whose pity for the miserable never mitigated His abhorrence of sin.[1]

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Garden and the City*, 131.

MOSES.

XIII.

Mount Nebo.

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Mount Nebo.

And the Lord spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: because ye trespassed against me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah of Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. For thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither into the land which I give the children of Israel.—Deut. xxxii. 48–52.

The great parable of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites has one of its profoundest applications in the death of the two great leaders of the people, Moses and Aaron. Life is more dramatic and tragic than we know; and when we read of the fate of these two illustrious brothers (the men who, above all others, seemed entitled to enter the Land of Promise)—neither of them falling in battle but both of them doomed to die by the sentence of Jehovah, whom they served and under whom they were leading the people—we are startled into a recognition of the true tragedy of life that there is in this. The indubitable impress of reality is upon it. How differently fable would have constructed the story! How different the apotheosis of mythical heroes! Moses and Aaron would have led the people into the Land of Promise, and ruled them there in triumph and honour; their sepulchres would have been proudly built in Jerusalem, and would have been among the shrines of the world. The destinies of real life are different; men do not so complete the cycle of their thought, the purpose of their work.

Aaron was the high priest of God, and, some infirmities notwithstanding, he was a noble and saintly man; in character and service second only to his brother Moses. But Aaron must die in Mount Hor, because, with Moses, he "waxed wroth with the people, and disobeyed the Lord at Meribah." Arrayed in his priestly robes, like a garlanded victim, he is led by Moses his

brother and Eleazar his son out of the midst of the wondering, weeping people, to the lonely summit of the mountain in Edom, where he dies. Imagination fails us when we try to realize the mystic solemnity of the position; the farewell glances upon the tented host in the Arabah valley below; the last words of affection and regret, of penitence and faith; the solemn awe of brother and son, as suddenly they looked upon the dead, unconscious body; the stern fortitude which dug his grave and buried him there, amid the weird limestone crags of that storm-worn summit. And then the submissive piety, the calm, tender heroism of faith, with which they descended to tell the people of the issue, and to mourn for Aaron forty days.

In like manner, Moses must die upon Nebo. Only, Moses must die alone. Neither son nor brother may close his dying eyes, or receive his last words. He, moreover, looks down, not only upon the host which for forty years he has led through the wilderness, but also upon the Land of Promise which they were just about to possess; and he, their deliverer from Egypt, their guide and legislator, their captain and ruler, is forbidden to enter it with them.

I.

The Fault.

1. The story of the sin of Moses is found in Num. xx. The tribes had come, after thirty-eight years' wandering, into the wilderness of Zin; and, finding no water, they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron. Once more the old murmurs were heard, "Wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us unto this evil place?" God's fidelity and the sin and punishment of their fathers were forgotten; they "chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!" Moses and Aaron went from the people to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and while they were on their faces before the Lord the glory of the Lord appeared again to them: Moses was commanded to take the rod, the symbol of God's presence, with him, and speak to the rock, which should give forth its water for the congregation. But the patience of Moses was worn out: standing before the

people, he addressed them thus: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Then "Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice; and the water came out abundantly."

The spirit of Moses appears clearly in the narrative. He is angry with the people, resentful; he treats their murmuring as an offence against himself. He parades his power before them: his twice smiting the rock reveals his heat. And God immediately rebukes him. He charges Moses with not sanctifying Him in the eyes of the people, and tells him that He shall not bring the congregation into the land which the Lord has given them.

¶ Perhaps we may take it that the outbreak of petulance when Moses smote the rock was only one instance of some general decay of character on that side, or perhaps one should rather say, of some general falling away from the self-restraint which had distinguished him. It seems strange that this one failure should have been punished in him, by exclusion from the land he had so steadfastly believed in, the land which most of those who actually entered it would never have seen but for him. And it is pathetic to find him among that great company of martyrs for the public good—those who in order to serve their people have neglected their own characters. Under the stress of public work and the pressure of the stupidity and greed of those whom they have sought to guide, many leaders of men have been tempted, and have yielded to the temptation, to forget the demands of their better nature. But whatever their services to the world, such unfaithfulness does not pass unpunished. They have to bear the penalty, whosoever they be; and Moses was no more an exception than Cromwell or Savonarola was, to mention only some of the nobler examples.[1]

> Herein consists the awfulness of human life,
> That no man knows the confines of a sin,
> The generations of a virtuous deed;
> And hence the obligation to entreat
> All men with tender charity, since all
> Are victims if offenders too; and oft
> The fractures of the wicked are derived
> From flaws of saints. And since one perfect Life
> Can leaven all, perhaps one sinning soul
> Can stay the bliss of all the Church of God.[2]

[1] A. Harper, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 485.
[2] A. Bunston, *The Porch of Paradise*, 33.

2. In a call to service, such as the call of Moses, there are perils.

(1) There are perils in its *graces*. We see in the narrative what we so often see, in the Bible and in life—that godly men will transgress just where they seem most secure, will yield to the temptations against which, either naturally or by past discipline, they seem to be best armed. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." God called him to a place requiring great meekness, and He endowed him with it. Naturally, he was perhaps rash and impulsive; but the failure of his first efforts to put himself at the head of the people, and his long sojourn as a shepherd in Midian, had sobered him. What strikes us most in his history is his quiet endurance, his self-devotion. When Aaron and Miriam speak against him, it is God who vindicates Moses, not Moses who vindicates himself. He pleads with God that they may be forgiven, and Miriam's curse removed. When the people "sin their great sin," making them gods of gold while he was with the Lord on Sinai, Moses prays: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." For eight-and-thirty years he "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself"; and it seemed as if the old hasty temper were quite subdued. But here at length, in an unguarded moment, the former passion blazes out, and the meekest of men is hot, resentful, self-assertive.

(2) There are perils belonging to the *gifts* of a high calling. If any one might have seemed secure against these perils, it was Moses, whose humility during his forty years' leadership was as conspicuous as his patience. He was the predestined leader of his people; marked out as such by the regal beauty which led his mother to save him, by the romantic story of his deliverance, by the accomplishments he acquired and the favour he enjoyed at the court of Pharaoh. Some consciousness of these advantages appears in his first presentation of himself to his brethren, and his supposing that they would have understood that God by his hand would deliver them. A court is not a good school in which to train men for the exercise of distinguished gifts. Far better the lonely desert, exile, and the humble work of tending flocks. Moses did seem to have learned his lesson. "Who am I?" he

asks, in unaffected self-distrust, when God tells him he is to lead Israel out of Egypt. "Who am I?" he questions again and again. He goes to God with all his difficulties, asks God to show him what to do; God gives him all his power; he exalts before the people, not himself, but God. All the more instructive is the arrogance of this humble man. Is this Moses who so proudly asks: "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Moses, just returned from the tabernacle, where he had prostrated himself on his face before the Lord!

(3) There are perils incident to the *fulfilment* of a high calling. A high calling means a calling to high and noble work, and the work brings its strain and weariness with it. God intends those whom He signally endows to be more to men than others are; more trusted, more lavish of themselves; and this implies a more than ordinary exposure to temptation, greater responsibilities, peculiar dangers. Those whom men look to as their leaders will be the first objects of their distrust; men demand more from them than from others, and will resent disappointment as a personal wrong. The people whom Moses led out of Egypt, who saw the wonders he had wrought for them, and knew the favour he enjoyed from God, were they of whom he said: "They be almost ready to stone me." Do anything for the people, they will expect you to do everything for them; do them good, they will demand that you do their pleasure; arouse high hopes in them, quicken in them spiritual aspiration, they will murmur at you should their meanest expectations fail, and at every disappointment will treat you as one who trifles with them.

A leader of men, moreover, must always be one of clearer insight, quicker emotion, stronger moral convictions, than others. He will be more aware than they are of their sin and weakness; he will judge their conduct by his conscience, and not by theirs. It was thus with Moses. The people murmured—poor, blind, ignorant people, they knew not how heinous was their ingratitude. Want of water was their great distress: they were like perverse children, not reflecting on their want of faith. All this Moses, however, did see; and, failing in lowliness and compassion, he failed in patience and self-control, and scorned them in their sin. A man so led away by passion perverts even his spiritual perceptions. Instead of thinking how patient God was with them,

Moses dwelt simply on their rebellion. He was wounded, provoked; he was angry; it was with personal bitterness that he said: "Hear now, ye rebels!" and smote the rock.

Moses, the patriot fierce, became
The meekest man on earth,
To show us how love's quick'ning flame
Can give our souls new birth.

Moses, the man of meekest heart,
Lost Canaan by self-will,
To show, where Grace has done its part,
How sin defiles us still.

Thou, who hast taught me in Thy fear,
Yet seest me frail at best,
O grant me loss with Moses here,
To gain his future rest![1]

II.

The Punishment.

1. It seems a trifling discrepancy of conduct—to strike instead of speaking. Moses was exasperated almost beyond endurance. We marvel, indeed, that he did not smite some of the inglorious faces raised towards his own. Modern criminal courts often refuse to find a verdict against a prisoner whose provocation has been less great than was Moses' that day. Under the circumstances we could excuse him for almost anything. "No soul is saved for a single excellence or damned for a single sin." Yet because of the particular faults of which Moses was guilty that day—his disobedience and temper—he was shut out of Canaan. The only glimpse he ever got of the land of milk and honey, to lead towards which had been the vast achievement of his life, was from the heights of Pisgah.

¶ As a bird stayed with a little string, or a strong man in swimming held back by a small twig, so a little sin stayeth this great captain (Moses) that he cannot come within the land of Canaan.[2]

[1] J. H. Newman, *Verses on Various Occasions.*

[2] Henry Smith.

2. But there are no trifles in God's thought. Long tales may ordinarily be compressed into nutshells.

> The massive gates of circumstance
> Are turned about the smallest hinge.

So a trifling deviation from the right course of human life may make all the difference between ultimate safe harbour and disaster on the rocks. With such delicate balance is the universe constructed. Some one says that if one of the stars were deflected a quarter of an inch from its orbit the whole system of worlds would rush to chaos. There are no trifles. When Moses departed from God's rule at Meribah he was guilty of a blunder which the years could not rectify.

¶ Some few years ago a certain merchant vessel drove on the rocks. There was no adequate excuse, apparently. The night was neither dark nor stormy. The commander was the most experienced and trusted on the line. For a time the mystery went unexplained. Then, in the binnacle, they found a bit of steel, broken, obviously, from the knife of the man who had cleaned the binnacle. The cleaner himself had scarcely missed the fragment. Lying unobserved beneath the needle, that bit of steel had as surely defeated the purpose of the compass as if it had weighed a thousand pounds. It was not a quarter of an inch in length, yet long enough to wreck a ship of more than three hundred feet. The whole knife from which the fragment was broken cost perhaps a half dollar, yet that tiny fragment caused a loss of half a million.[1]

¶ Indifference to moral trifles is a source of danger. A little matter may be fatal, if the strain of some terrible temptation should come upon the weak spot. When the famous fight took place between the *Merrimac* and the *Monitor*, and the Federal forces in the American Civil War gained supremacy at sea, it might easily have been a reverse instead of a victory. There were some critical moments. Time was lost and risk invited by a very small defect, not found out until the season of trial. During the passage from New York, the engineer of the *Monitor* had omitted to clean and oil properly the working gear of the revolving turret. The plan was all right. Failure was in the drudgery behind—in inattention to details. Salt water had touched portions of the machinery, with the result that rust appeared. As the action opened, the turret refused to move.

[1] G. C. Peck, *Old Sins in New Clothes*, 169.

It was anxious work to repair the mischief. It is thus with moral or intellectual negligence. The rust will come, and the defect, and the peril. There are no trifles in morals. The grains make the mountains of honour or reproach.[1]

3. It is but a single blot in the career of the prophet, and it is but slightly touched by the sacred narrative. Still it was thought sufficiently important for Josephus, after his manner, to suppress all mention of it; and it just reveals that shade of weakness in the character of Moses which adds so much to our impression of its general strength.

¶ Three of the principal rivers of Scotland rise from the same hill-side. Only a very small space of ground separates the sources of the Annan, the Tweed, and the Clyde from each other. At a place called Wolf Clyde not far from the spot where the Clyde begins to flow, a very strange thing may sometimes be seen. The valley through which the stream of the Biggar runs, at this point stretches between the Clyde and the Tweed; and, as its level is only a little higher than the bed of the Clyde, during a high flood part of the water of the Clyde overflows its channel and runs into the Biggar stream, and is carried by it into the Tweed. This happens once, perhaps, in three or four years. And you can understand how very easy it would be to send the Clyde to Berwick instead of to Glasgow, to the German Ocean instead of to the Atlantic, and so alter the whole character and history both of the east and of the west of Scotland.

Now this is an apt illustration of what sometimes happens in human life. You will have noticed that it is during a high flood that some of the water of the Clyde overflows into the channel of a stream that carries it away in a direction altogether different from that of the river of which it had previously formed a part. And so it is often during a high flood of passion that the stream of human life is turned from its usual course, and made to flow in an entirely opposite direction. A moment of anger, of pride or unbelief, of strong temptation, may so swell the current of life as to cause it to overflow its banks, and completely change its whole future destiny.[2]

[1] W. J. Lacey, *Masters of To-morrow*, 86.
[2] H. Macmillan, *The Daisies of Nazareth*, 204.

III.

Pisgah.

1. The end was at last come. It might still have seemed that a triumphant close was in store for the aged prophet. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." He had led his people to victory against the Amorite kings; he might still be expected to lead them over into the land of Canaan. But so it was not to be. From the desert plains of Moab he went up to the same lofty range whence Balaam had looked over the same prospect. The same, but seen with eyes how different! The view of Balaam has long been forgotten; but the view of Moses has become the proverbial view of all time. It was the peak dedicated to Nebo on which he stood. "He lifted up his eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward." Beneath him lay the tents of Israel ready for the march; and "over against" them, distinctly visible in its grove of palm-trees, the stately Jericho, key of the Land of Promise. Beyond was spread out the whole range of the mountains of Palestine, in its fourfold masses: "all Gilead," with Hermon and Lebanon in the east and north; the hills of Galilee, overhanging the Lake of Gennesareth; the wide opening where lay the plain of Esdraelon, the future battle-field of the nations; the rounded summits of Ebal and Gerizim; and beyond them the dim haze of the distant sea; immediately in front of him the hills of Judæa and, amidst them, seen distinctly through the rents in their rocky walls, Bethlehem on its narrow ridge, and the invincible fortress of Jebus.

A glorious spectacle, a magnificent prospect for any eyes, as the very few—travellers and pilgrims—who have had the opportunity of beholding it have with one consent declared. But what a spectacle for him! He saw the land, not merely in its natural beauty, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land of mountains and brooks, a land which was the glory of all lands; but he saw it as the land which the Lord had given to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and to their seed, to the end that, in spite of all the sin and opposition of men, even of those who were the bearers of His promises, He might there work out the eternal purposes of His love; that He might found there a fortress of true religion,

where His worship should be maintained during the long and weary ages in which all the rest of the world should be wholly given to idolatry; and from which, in due time, should go forth the ambassadors of His grace, who should everywhere declare His name, and plant the banners of the faith in every land.

And as he saw it, and understood, if not all, yet much of the significance of that land for all the after-history of mankind, how it should be indeed a Holy Land, for it should be once trodden by the feet of One, a prophet like unto him, and greater than he, for He should be Moses and Joshua in one, and far more than either, far more than both; as he saw this good land, may we not believe that he was comforted for all, felt that it was glory enough for a sinful man to have been used by God to bring His people thus far, even to the verge and border of this land of inheritance? May we not be sure that with him was not merely a perfect acquiescence in the will of God, so that he accepted that will without murmuring or repining, but that he felt goodness and mercy to have followed him from the first to the last, and that no good thing had been withholden from him? Thus, looking in that supreme hour before and after, looking back to all the way by which the Lord had led him, to those three mysterious forties into which his life had been divided, the forty years at the court of Pharaoh, the forty years in the land of Midian, and now the forty years in the wilderness; and looking forward to a land of inheritance, fairer, richer, brighter than even that which he now saw but must never tread, the weary, much-enduring man yielded his spirit to his God. God, as the Jewish rabbis assure us, drew out that spirit with a kiss—they meaning by this to express their sense of the serene composure, the painless peace of his departure.

> And the Lord came, invisible as a thought,
> Three angels gleaming on his secret track,
> Prince Michaël, Zagaël, Gabriel, charged to guard
> The soul-forsaken body as it fell
> And bear it to the hidden sepulchre
> Denied for ever to the search of man.
> And the Voice said to Moses: "Close thine eyes."
> He closed them. "Lay thine hand upon thine heart,
> And draw thy feet together." He obeyed.

And the Lord said, "O spirit! child of mine!
A hundred years and twenty thou hast dwelt
Within this tabernacle wrought of clay.
This is the end: Come forth and flee to heaven."

But the grieved soul with plaintive pleading cried,
"I love this body with a clinging love:
The courage fails me, Lord, to part from it."

"O child, come forth! for thou shalt dwell with Me
About the immortal throne where seraphs joy
In growing vision and in growing love."

Yet hesitating, fluttering, like the bird
With young wing weak and dubious, the soul
Stayed. But behold! upon the death-dewed lips
A kiss descended, pure, unspeakable—
The bodiless Love without embracing Love
That lingered in the body, drew it forth
With heavenly strength and carried it to heaven.[1]

2. One final honour was in store for Moses still. No human hands bore the dead lawgiver and prophet to his grave, or composed him there. "He," that is, God, as we are told, "buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day"; he whom God buried, according to all likelihood not seeing corruption, and his grave unknown because probably he was raised from it as soon as laid there; only just tasting the penalty of death and then that penalty removed—as would all seem to be indicated and implied by the apparition of Moses, with Elijah, in a glorified body upon the Mount of Transfiguration. The same also seems pointed at in an obscure passage in the Epistle of St. Jude, where mention is made of the Archangel Michael on the one side, and of Satan on the other, disputing about the body of Moses; Satan contending that he, as a sinner, should pay to the uttermost all the penalties of sin, death, and the return to dust which goes along with death; the Archangel Michael, the great Prince who standeth for the children of his people, declaring that for him one part of the penalty, not indeed the essence of it, but this adjunct to it, was remitted.

[1] George Eliot.

We would fain know something of the details of that strange and lonely death. But the narrative is silent. Where Scripture is silent, however, tradition has, as usual, been busy in supplying the information that we crave. "Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions crowd in to fill up the blank. 'Amidst the tears of the people, the women beating their breasts, and the children giving way to uncontrolled wailing, he withdrew. At a certain point in his ascent he made a sign to the weeping multitude to advance no farther, taking with him only the elders, the high priest Eleazar, and the general Joshua. At the top of the mountain he dismissed the elders, and then, as he was embracing Eleazer and Joshua, and still speaking to them, a cloud suddenly stood over him, and he vanished in a deep valley.' So spoke the tradition, as preserved in the language, here unusually pathetic, of Josephus. Other stories told of the 'Ascension of Moses' amidst the contention of good and evil spirits over his body." But do we not feel that, after all, the simplicity and silence of Scripture best befit the dignity, the awfulness of the event? He saw—he died—he was buried; and "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

"And no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." That is the fitting crown to such a life; for it leaves it of one piece. There are people on whom the recognitions and distinctions do not alight. There was no vainglory in his life, no shadow of vainglory in his death. He led his people to the borders of the Promised Land, "his eye not dim, nor his natural force abated"; he beheld it stretched before them for their occupation. He made no claim, not even on remembrance, beyond the life-power he had instilled into their hearts. Is it too trivial to cite in such a context the epitaph which in gentler accents expresses at least the mood in which he passed from earthly leadership?—

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me,
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree.

Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet,
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

Just for the greatest, that is the fitting end. Their life is only in the hearts of men. For Aaron there was mourning thirty days, and his tomb is to this day a place of pilgrimage. But Socrates, Moses, Christ—they left behind them no written word. Was not that a part of their spiritual greatness? Was it not a part, too, or an emblem, of their immortality, that they lay down in no remembered grave?

¶ There are consecrated graves where priest never stood, where mourner never knelt, where tear never fell. There are spots hallowed by your Father which to you are barren ground. God's acre is larger than the churchyard. Out on yon bleak hillside He wrapped your friend to rest in a mantle of spotless snow. Is not that bleak hillside God's acre evermore? Is it not as holy to you as if you had brought sweet spices to the tomb? It has no chant but the winds, no book but the solemn silence, no bell but some wild bird's note, no wreath but the wreath of snow; yet there is no more sacred spot in all the diocese of God.[1]

¶ There are a number of Scotsmen in the Hawaiian Islands, many of them being managers of sugar plantations, engineers, mechanics, or engaged in mercantile pursuits. The Scottish Thistle Club of Honolulu sent a deputation to ask Stevenson if he would favour the Club with a short talk or lecture on any subject. He cordially consented to give a lecture, and it took place in the hall of the Club. Stevenson, who gave a brilliant and humorous talk on Scottish history, wound up by saying, "I received a book the other day called *The Stickit Minister*, with a dedication to myself, which affected me strangely, so that I cannot read it without a gulp. It was addressed to me in the third person, and bade me remember those places 'where, about the graves of the Martyrs, the whaups are crying—his heart remembers how.' Now when I think on my latter end, as I do sometimes—especially of late years when it seems less imminent—I feel that when I shall come to die out here among these beautiful islands, I shall have lost something that had been my due, my predestinate but forfeited grave among honest Scots sods; and I feel that I shall never quite attain to what Patrick Walker calls, in one of those pathetic touches of which I have already spoken, my 'resting grave,' unless it were to be in one of our purple hillsides, under one of our old, quaint, and half-obliterated table-tombstones slanting down the brae, and 'where, about the

[1] G. Matheson, *Messages of Hope*, 51.

graves of the Martyrs, the whaups are crying, my heart remembers how.'"[1]

IV.

The Worker and the Work.

1. "I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither"—these words were, indeed, especially and mysteriously applicable to him to whom they were thus spoken. Nevertheless, the case of Moses, however striking, was not exceptional. Rather it is true that to labour and not to see the end of our labours, to sow and not to reap, to be removed from this earthly scene before our work has been appreciated, and when it will be carried on not by ourselves, but by others—this is a law so common in the highest characters of history that none can be said to be altogether exempt from its operation.

¶ Among those who may be called, by distinction, the leaders of the world's secular history, we have an illustrious example in the case of Columbus, the intrepid explorer who had found the New World of the West, but who died almost broken-hearted, and with the chains of his shameful imprisonment still hanging on the wall of his room, reminding how the jealousies of king and courtiers, the base intrigues of covetous enemies, and the calumnies of his own mutinous followers, had frustrated all his plans and ruined all his hopes. For, not only to discover, but to help to settle, and above all to bring the good tidings of Christ to, those far-off lands—this had been his hope, his ambition. And, indeed, an empire mightier and richer than he dreamt of, and a Christianity ampler, purer, and more free—all this should result, in the years to follow, from the achievement of his tireless patience and undaunted bravery. But it was for him only to open the way, not to enter in. He saw with his eyes, but might not go over thither. So was it also with that intrepid Englishman, one of the chief leaders of this world's spiritual history, William Tyndale. Not long after the death of Columbus, dining one day at the table of Sir John Walsh in Gloucestershire, and rebuking the priests who were present because they neither knew the Scriptures themselves nor were willing that others should learn, he declared that, if God gave him life and strength, there should come a time when every ploughboy in England should

[1] J. A. Hammerton, *Stevensoniana*, 98.

know more of the Bible than they did. And right nobly he fulfilled his vow; for our English Bible of to-day, so familiar in every home, is practically Tyndale's work. But he himself, when his work was done, was strangled and burnt before the dream of his life began to fulfil itself. He beheld, from afar, the Promised Land, but he might not enter there.[1]

2. To speak of the lot of those who do not see the end of their labours in terms which imply or suggest it to be the most tragic and pathetic that can befall the sons of men is to forget the dignity of all true and noble toil, and to sin at once against reason and against faith.

(1) Against reason: for who does not feel that their fate is a most happy one as compared with that of those who either have no great work to do, or are incapable of doing it; who have no fair and large opportunity of serving their fellows, or who cannot rise to it when it comes? Who does not feel that, die when they will, their life mounts to a triumphant close as compared with that of reformers or statesmen, whose work is done, or is snatched away from them, long before their life comes to a close, who outstay their welcome, perhaps outlive their reputation, lag superfluous on the stage, and at last sink into an unhonoured grave?

(2) And if it be true—as surely it is true—that

> The sun, the moon, the stars
> Send no such light upon the ways of men
> As one great deed;

if it be true of those who do such deeds that

> Their examples reach a hand
> Far thro' all years, and everywhere they meet
> And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
> To mould it into action pure as theirs,

it is plain that the great men taken from us, prematurely, as we think, so far from having ceased from their labours, even in this world, as we thoughtlessly assume, may be doing far more in and for the world now that they have passed out of it than they did while still in it. As, indeed, is demonstrably true of Moses. For large and heroic as was the service he rendered to Israel, and through Israel to the world, while he wore flesh about him, it was

[1] T. F. Lockyer, *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, 162.

as nothing compared with the influence he is exerting on the present generation. It is many centuries since he was buried in the grave of which no man knew or knows; and yet he is alive, active, at work in and upon the world, to this day; doing more for men than ever, not only by the inspiration of his historic life and example, but also by the direct and incalculable effects of his legislation and teaching. His ten commandments are inscribed in our very statute-books as well as on the walls of our churches; and his great words and deeds "shed light on the ways of men" in all Muhammadan as well as in all Christian lands.

¶ At the time of the Reformation there was a preacher at Cambridge named Chaderton. One of his converts, Culverwell by name, became a preacher in turn, and was the means of the conversion of one John Winthrop, who afterwards became famous as Governor Winthrop. Another of Chaderton's converts was William Perkins, who also became a preacher. Two of his converts were John Cotton, of Boston, and John Robinson, the Pilgrim Father. Now, Governor Winthrop, John Cotton, of Boston, and John Robinson, the Pilgrim Father, were among the chief of those who laid the splendid Puritan foundations of the United States, so that the great Christian commonwealth across the Atlantic is largely the indirect fruit of the work of the Cambridge preacher named Chaderton.[1]

[1] B. J. Gibbon, *The True Ritual*, 29.

MOSES.

XIV.

My Servant Moses.

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My Servant Moses.

My servant Moses . . . is faithful in all mine house.—Num. xii. 7.

1. The general impression left on our minds by the life and character of Moses, regarded as a whole, is unquestionably one of extraordinary, almost solitary, grandeur, dignity and elevation. Wordsworth's line describes it best:—

Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.

There is not a single character in the Old Testament that will bear comparison with it—for purity, for elevation, for power, for pathos. There is only one character in the whole range of history that overtops it; and *that* is more than human—the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¶ The character of Moses is sketched, particularly in the earlier narratives of J and E, with peculiar vividness and force. He is represented not only as a man of deeply religious spirit, but also as endowed, in a pre-eminent degree, with singleness of aim, with nobility of mind, with dignity of demeanour, with unwearied and self-sacrificing devotion for the welfare of his people, and with that modesty of both word and demeanour which is observable in all the best characters of Old Testament history, and which was no doubt impressed upon them by the mellowing influences of the religion of Yahweh.[1]

¶ Moses is incontestably the chief personage of the whole history of the Exodus. In the narrative, the phrase is constantly recurring: "The Lord spake unto Moses," "Moses spake unto the children of Israel." In the traditions of the desert, whether late or early, his name predominates over that of every one else: "The Wells of Moses" (Ayûn Mûsa) on the shores of the Red Sea, "The Mountain of Moses" (Jebel Mûsa) near the convent of St. Catherine, "The Ravine of Moses" (Skuk Mûsa) at Mount St. Catherine, "The Valley of Moses" (Wady Mûsa) at Petra. "The Books of Moses" are so called (as afterwards the Books of Samuel),

[1] S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, lxix.

in all probability from its being the chief subject of them. The very word "Mosaic" has been in later times applied, in a sense not used of any other saint of the Old Testament, to the whole religion of which he was the expounder.[1]

¶ The debt owed to Moses by his fellow-countrymen can hardly be over-estimated. Lawgiver and judge, physician and priest, their leader in war and peace, where has there ever been the monarch who could compare with this marvellously gifted individual, founder of a religion, of a code, of a nation that has victoriously withstood all perils, and outlived the mighty empires by which it was overthrown and oppressed? Caesar, Charlemagne, and Haroun-al-Rashid, wise and powerful as they may have been, must each yield the palm to Moses, for their work has left no trace, the ideals to which they devoted their lives are but an empty name, whilst the Hebrew, born in servitude, has left his mark on the thought, the action, and the religion of the whole Gentile world, and made of the wretched tribes, whom he led forth out of bondage, a nation increasing daily in number and in strength, wealthy beyond all others, and rapidly spreading over the face of the earth.[2]

2. An epithet is applied to Moses in the Bible hardly consistent with the view that he was a great leader of men. He is called "very meek" (Num. xii. 3), the word used being generally applied in the Psalms to the poor and afflicted ones of the nation. Yet this characteristic seems to have been one of the secrets of his success. Moses was able to endure the difficulties of his position in silence, and the unreasonable and childish conduct of the people never provoked him to abandon his task. He went on steadily day by day attending to their interests, hearing their disputes, doing justice between man and man, waiting patiently for signs of improvement which seldom, if ever, manifested themselves. Educated amid all the splendours of an Egyptian palace, he devoted his life to the government of a half-civilized and undisciplined horde, bearing with waywardness, folly, and ingratitude with unshaken constancy, and by his sublime endurance winning from posterity the fame of having been the "most enduring of men."

By all accounts Moses did not begin by being a meek man.

[1] A. P. Stanley, *History of the Jewish Church*, i. 119.

[2] *From Memory's Shrine: Reminiscences of Carmen Sylva*, 70.

The truth is, no truly meek man ever does so begin. It is not true meekness if it is found in any man at the beginning of his life. It may be sloth, it may be softness, it may be easiness, it may be indifference, it may be policy and calculation, it may be insensibility of heart, it may be sluggishness of blood, but true meekness it is not. True meekness it is not till it has been planted and watered and pruned and purified and beaten upon by every wind of God, and cut to pieces by every knife of God, and all the time engrafted and seated deep in the meekness and in the gentleness and in the humility of the Spirit of God and the Son of God. It would be far nearer the truth to say that Moses, to begin with, was the hastiest and the hottest and the least meek and the least longsuffering of men. It was but a word and a blow with young Moses. Thus it was that he had to pay with forty years' banishment for his sudden spring upon that Egyptian taskmaster, and for the life-long thanks of that delivered slave.

¶ Every one will admit that the record of the life of Moses manifests a patience, meekness, and constancy, which is perhaps the most wonderful ever displayed by a man. We are told, indeed, of occasional outbursts of wrath that bore down all meekness; and men have pointed to them as proofs that Moses was not so wonderfully patient; but those very outbursts of anger seem to be the strongest proofs of his patience. For there is a kind of gentleness which belongs to men whose feelings are too placid to be stirred by injustice, and who maintain a mild calmness even in the presence of flagrant wrong,—*that* gentleness was not his, who, in his youth, fired at the sight of the oppression of his people, struck down the oppressor at the peril of his own life. There is an amiability of character which springs from the absence of powerful feelings, and which is seldom disturbed—*that* was not characteristic of him who, roused into fury at the people's murmurings, smote the rock in disobedience to his Lord. The nobler meekness is that which comes forth victorious from the struggle with strong emotion, and wins a glory from the passion it has subdued. And thus, that very indication of an impetuous, fiery nature in Moses only reveals the beauty of the meek patience which marked his life. If you can conceive a man who had hoped for forty years for the deliverance of his people, discovering that they had been careless, faithless, and sensual, and yet silently bearing their reproaches—a man with a passionate, impetuous spirit, enduring their daily murmurings, and after giving way to

anger, praying for their success, till, worn with emotion, his strength gave way—a man enduring constant, ignorant, perverse unthankfulness, in the hope of leading the people into their own land, and then calmly surrendering that hope, and dying with it unfulfilled, you can form some idea of the sublime meekness that characterized the leadership of Moses.[1]

In seeking to estimate the character of Moses as the historical narratives have made him live before us, we may consider him as (1) Leader, (2) Lawgiver, and (3) Prophet.

I.

The Leader.

Thou leddest thy people like a flock,
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.—Ps. lxxvii. 20.

That the ancestors—or some of the ancestors—of the later Israelites were for long settled in Egypt, and in the end subjected there to hard bondage; that Moses was the leader who, after much opposition on the part of the Pharaoh, rescued them from their thraldom at a time when Egypt was paralysed by an unprecedented succession of national calamities, and led them through a part of the Red Sea usually covered with water, beyond reach of their recent oppressors; that he brought them afterwards to a mountain where Israel received through him a revelation which was a new departure in the national religion, and became the foundation both of the later religion of Israel and of Christianity; that he originated, or more probably adapted, customs and institutions from which the later civil and religious organization of the nation was developed; and that thus Israel owed to Moses both its national existence and, ultimately, its religious character—these, and other facts such as these, cannot be called in question by a reasonable criticism.

1. Had Moses the gifts of leadership? We are certainly impressed more by his silence and backwardness than by his speech. But the truth is that for leadership, in any *disinterested*

[1] E. L. Hull, *Sermons*, iii. 107.

cause, the outward gifts count for little compared with inward strength. So far as your true motive is personal ambition and display, take prudently the measure of your powers, and do not overstep your actual capacities. "Nature sets its just premium on reality." No eloquence or emphasis avails, if to those that hear you the expression seems somehow rather larger than the man. If you are called by the inner voice to some *unselfish* enterprise and service, the scale of it, the risk, the weight of the responsibility, the felt deficiency of gifts, need not hold you back, if only you will bring to it the veracity, the generosity of spirit, the trust in God, which gave to Moses power and place of leadership. "I am that I am"; cling fast to the eternal and the true, and you need fear no exposure of human weaknesses: *they* will not bring you to discredit or to shame. And grudge not their gifts to any. If others should outshine you in charm or brilliance or power of inspiration, think not that they usurp your place, but say with Moses, "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" You cannot covet influence too much. It is among God's choicest gifts. To every young man who is face to face with choice of his profession I would say, See that that finds its place in your scales of choice. As you choose between the law, medicine, the civil service, the army, the desk, the ministry, the school, bethink you well which offers you the field of influence most germane to your personal type. It is the thing most precious, most praiseworthy, the thing which most abides before the judgment-seat of God. But the longer you live and the more experience ripens, the more you will realize that it proceeds not from gifts, but from sincerity of life, unselfishness of aim, and fidelity to God. It is the least self-conscious of all powers. No sense of shortcoming impairs it. Moses, as history proves, possessed it in pre-eminent degree; but Moses, I doubt not, was to the last more conscious of failure than of success. "Meekest of men" became his epithet, and therefore the most staunch, the most enduring, the most impervious to defeat.[1]

¶ In reading the early letters of men of genius I can recall my former self, full of an aspiration which had not learned how hard the hills of life are to climb, but thought rather to alight down

[1] G. H. Rendall, *Charterhouse Sermons*, 29.

upon them from its winged vantage-ground. Whose fulfilment has ever come nigh the glorious greatness of his yet never-balked youth? As we grow older, art becomes to us a definite faculty, instead of a boundless sense of power. Then we felt the wings burst from our shoulders; they were a gift and a triumph, and a bare flutter from twig to twig seemed aquiline to us; but now our vans, though broader grown and stronger, are matters of every day. We may reach our Promised Land; but it is far behind us in the Wilderness, in the early time of struggle, that we have our Sinais and our personal talk with God in the bush.[1]

2. Notice other signs of leadership in Moses.

(1) He had a keen sense of wrong when witnessing the ill-usage of others, an indignation against injustice, a warm sympathy with the weak under the oppression of the strong. All people profess this sympathy, but in some it is a feeling which leads to action. It was such a feeling in Moses, as the very first act of his which we read of shows—when he saw one of the Israelites suffering wrong from an Egyptian, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian. The Israelites were a poor despised race in Egypt, and the Egyptians ill-treated them. Moses saw one of these cases of ill-usage, and it roused in him immediately this sympathy for the oppressed, and this indignation against oppression. So again in Midian, when he fled there, his first act was to stand up for the seven daughters of the priest of Midian who came to water their flocks at the well, and whom the violent and unmannerly shepherds drove away. They went home and told their father: "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hands of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock." This was the disposition of Moses, and therefore God chose him to be the deliverer of the children of Israel out of Egypt.

(2) At first rash and impulsive, Moses submitted to the Divine chastisement and discipline so thoroughly that a real change was produced in his character. This is a fact which arrests our attention. A real change in the temper of any man is a wonderful thing. We rarely see it, so rarely that we are sometimes tempted to doubt whether there is such a thing. People change particular habits; they learn to control particular

[1] *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, i. 154.

bodily appetites and passions; they may give up drinking or gaming, or swearing; they may force themselves to do things which they once neglected to do; even if there is a deep fault at the root of a man, such as pride, jealousy, meanness, we may often see that fault disguised, moderated in its outward expression, and made to look more plausible; yet how seldom do we see a really converted heart, a new-born man in the deepest and most vital parts of the character! The change in the disposition of Moses is revealed in such genuine acts that it ranks with the other great changes of heart in Scripture—the change in him who once would have called down fire from heaven to consume those who opposed themselves to the truth, and who afterwards became the preacher of love; the change in him who was once Saul and afterwards Paul.

(3) His sympathy for the people is deeper, keener than before. But now it is used to bear with them, plead for them, and when necessary denounce and resist them. He is thus the pattern of the good ruler, and stands in special contrast to the selfish ruler of the world's type. The successful ruler of the world's type is one who uses the weaknesses and the vices of mankind for his own personal advantage and exaltation. He maintains his own influence and position, not by curbing and restraining the follies and humours of the people, but by skilfully yielding and giving way to them; he quotes and misapplies the proverb of the oak and the sapling, one of which was uprooted by the storm because in its strength it withstood it; the other survived the storm because in its weakness it yielded to it. Thus by making himself convenient to man's corrupt wishes, he keeps up his place in the world; he does not really care for the people's good, but uses compliance with others only to secure the exaltation of himself. Power is a selfish prize in his eyes. A good ruler, on the other hand, cares for the good of the people, and for that good will run the risk even of losing his own power. Moses, in resisting the vices of his people, has set the pattern of such a ruler. He did not maintain his power by giving way to them. He resisted their sins, he rebuked them, he punished them, while he loved them, and because he loved them.

¶ It so happens that Moses has been interpreted to us by one of deeper insight than any critic or commentator, by a spirit as

great and lofty as his own; and, above all, by one whose life, like that of Moses, was made bitter by the treachery, stupidity, and sensuality of a generation among whom he towered up, a soul too great not to be misunderstood. Four hundred years ago there lived a man, sculptor, painter, poet, to whom God gave a mighty genius for art. His name we know as Michelangelo; and Michelangelo, in his divinest inspiration, sculptured the face and figure of Moses. "If among all the masterpieces of ancient and modern statuary there is one that stands forth without a parallel, the most impressive figure ever sculptured in stone or bronze, it is the statue of Moses by Michelangelo." And how does Michelangelo interpret the meekest of all the men that were upon the face of the earth? To say that the face of the sculptured Moses is strong, wise, majestic, is to fall short of the truth. It is almost terrible in its greatness and loftiness. The lines of care, and sorrow, and disappointment are deep in it; and yet they are lost and forgotten in the unconquerable power and wisdom of it. It is the face of a man who might move among his fellows as a kind of god. But according to the old Latin proverb, "The gods themselves are vanquished by stupidity"; and so the artist has left on the face of the Lawgiver, the shadow of that life-long struggle with the perverseness, the ignorance, and the degradation of the race of slaves whom he made into a nation.[1]

When I do think on thee, sweet Hope, and how
  Thou followest on our steps, a coaxing child
  Oft chidden hence, yet quickly reconciled,
Still turning on us a glad, beaming brow,
And red, ripe lips for Kisses; even now
  Thou mindest me of him, the Ruler mild,
  Who led God's chosen people through the wild,
And bore with wayward murmurers, meek as thou
That bringest waters from the Rock, with bread
  Of angels strewing Earth for us! like him
  Thy force abates not, nor thine eye grows dim;
But still with milk and honey-droppings fed,
  Thou leadest to the Promised Country fair,
  Though thou, like Moses, may'st not enter there![2]

[1] W. Danks, *The Church on the Moor*, 87.

[2] Dora Greenwell.

II.

The Lawgiver.

The law was given by Moses.—John i. 17.

1. That "the law was given by Moses" is the universal tradition of the Jewish Church. To what extent does modern scholarship confirm the truth of the tradition?

(1) It may fairly be questioned, says Ottley, whether the Decalogue *in its present form* can be ascribed to Moses. In the first place, what appears to be an older and widely different version of the "ten words" is found in the Book of Exodus (xxxiv. 14–26); secondly, the Decalogue in its present form seems to be influenced by the teaching of the eighth-century prophets. It is also urged that an exclusively *moral* code is not consistent with the predominantly ritualistic character of early religions. Other arguments have been adduced which it is needless to consider in detail. The facts as they stand are perplexing, and justify a suspension of judgment. It is reasonable to suppose that the Decalogue in its present form bears traces of expansion in prophetic times; at the same time it lays down principles of morality which are so elementary as to be strictly consistent with what we know of the condition of Israel in Mosaic times. It is difficult to see what other precepts could have been better adapted to lift the Hebrews above the degraded nature-religion of their heathen neighbours, to teach them the true character of their Divine Deliverer, and to educate them in the rudiments of social justice and humanity. In short, the "ten words" as we have them in the Pentateuch may be a later prophetic summary of the great moral *ideas* contained in the religion of Moses; but there is every reason to suppose that in a brief and easily remembered form the primary moral precepts of the Decalogue constituted *from the first* the foundation of Israel's national development. It is indeed impossible otherwise to account for the vitality and vigour which gave to the Hebrews their physical and moral superiority over the inhabitants of Canaan. The Decalogue has in fact intrinsic credibility as a Mosaic utterance, and we may reasonably accept it as an

authentic monument—at least in its main substance—of the period to which Hebrew tradition assigns it.

¶ While many of the enactments of the Book of the Covenant served but a temporary purpose, and passed away with the religion of Judaism, the Decalogue has been retained unchanged in the Christian Church. The Divinity of its origin and the excellency of its contents still give it a foremost place in the theology of every Christian community. There is nothing in it that is not valid for mankind. It is a universal code of morals. No compend of morality among ethnic religions can be compared with it. The ethical systems of Confucius, of Zoroaster, of Buddha, of the Greek moralists, are far behind it as a summary of human duty. All will admit that the Decalogue is cast in an archaic mould ; and the negative form in which its commandments are addressed is in keeping with its primitive character. In the infantile life of a nation, as in child life, the early part of its moral training must always consist of concrete precepts, expressed in a prohibitory form. In the first portion of a child's life it has to be kept from harm by continual prohibitions ; and the formation at that early stage of the habit of obedience to these simple prohibitory commands is essential to moral well-being. Thus it is thoroughly consistent with the youthful stage of the Beni-Israel, a horde of slaves newly enfranchised and little better than children, that this fundamental code of moral and religious duty should be one not of principles but of plain precepts. Children do not understand principles : they must at first receive simple, concrete directions as to what they shall do and not do. Truth must be accommodated to the measure of their mind ; and while they cannot comprehend the principles that lie at the basis of property, they understand the command " Do not steal." The first stage of moral education will be full of restrictions. And the form of the Decalogue is in keeping with the stage of Israel's progress in morality.[1]

(2) Again, some forms of worship were doubtless observed in the wilderness, though it is impossible to point to any details of *cultus* prescribed by Moses himself. Some traditional usages seem to have been retained or regulated by the lawgiver. There certainly existed a primitive sanctuary, or " tent of meeting," designed to serve as the seat of the sacred oracle and as a shelter for the ark. In form this structure would resemble the ordinary shepherd's tent, having its outer and inner compartment, and

[1] W. S. Bruce, *The Ethics of the Old Testament*, 85.

standing in an enclosed court. The tent of meeting seems in Mosaic times to have been pitched *outside* the camp (Exod. xxxiii. 7; Num. xi. 26, xii. 4), and not, as was assumed in post-exilic times, at its centre. Sacrifices of some kind must have been offered during the wanderings, but we can only conjecture what their exact significance may have been. According to the primitive Semitic idea, sacrifice was the means of renewing or maintaining the bond which united the people to their god; and a ceremony like that described in connexion with the ratification of the covenant (Exod. xxiv.) would probably be repeated on special occasions, *e.g.*, before the tribes engaged in battle with their enemies. If Moses instituted a regular priesthood, possibly recruited from members of his own tribe (Levi), it is unlikely that its main function was that of sacrifice. The "holy" persons of Semitic antiquity were attached to the sanctuary and were its recognized guardians, but they were employed chiefly in consulting the oracle touching matters of difficulty. To the priesthood would naturally fall the task of continuing the work of Moses, *i.e.*, imparting *torah* to those who asked for guidance, and giving judicial sentences (*toroth*) in matters of dispute. Thus a traditional and authoritative *torah* would gradually be formed, and there would be a tendency for the priesthood to become hereditary in certain families. The means by which Jehovah's will was ascertained was usually the casting of the sacred lot, and it is easy to understand how rapidly the priesthood would acquire a powerful influence over the mass of the people. The original *torah* given by Moses, and after his time by the priesthood, was oral; and the name "En-mishpat" ("well of judgment") at Kadesh, which was for a long period the religious centre of the tribes, indicates that the sanctuary was invariably the seat of justice, as well as the place of worship.

¶ Even on Wellhausen's own admissions, it may be urged that the Levitical Law, as we have it now, is but the codified form of the Torahs given by Moses. For that critic makes the Jews go from Egypt to Kadesh, as "the original object of their wanderings," and there spend "the forty years of their wanderings in the wilderness." "The legislation at the seat of judgment at Kadesh," he proceeds to say, "goes on for forty years, and consists in the dispensation of justice at the sanctuary, which he begins,

and the priests and judges carry on after him according to the pattern he set. And in this way the Torah has its place in the historical narrative, not in virtue of its matter as the contents of a code, but from its form as constituting the professional activity of Moses. It is in history not as a result, as the sum of the laws and usages binding on Israel, but as a process." From this point of view Moses was the author of the Customary Law of Israel, which assumes a codified form in the Pentateuch, and the Law thus codified may not improperly be called the Law of Moses, as tradition has taught us to call it.[1]

2. If we seek to know to what extent the Mosaic legislation is original, we need go no further than the Code of Hammurabi. Dr. C. H. W. Johns, in a very full examination of the Code of Hammurabi and its relation to the Mosaic legislation, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, v. 611, sums up in these words: "We may say that the Israelite legislation shows strong traces of Babylonian influence, and yet not destroy the independence of its origin. We cannot suppose that the author of any code set to work to draw up a comprehensive scheme of law. Each built upon the already prevailing custom. His attention would be directed chiefly to what was not matter of uniform treatment. The most characteristically Babylonian things in the current custom of the day in Israel may be just those which are not legislated for. The new legislation did not require to touch what was so firmly established. Other things of Babylonian origin may have been abrogated by the new laws—it would not be necessary to say what they had been, but merely by stating the new law to say they should be no longer. That any Israelite code shows marked differences from the Code of Hammurabi is enough to show an independent origin. The absence of any difference would show complete dependence. The co-existing likenesses and differences argue for an independent recension of ancient custom deeply influenced by Babylonian law. The actual Code of Hammurabi is a witness to what influence might accomplish. It cannot be held to be a creative source. The Code may only be itself a proof of the same influences. These may be called Semitic in preference to Babylonian. But that view calls for overwhelming proof that there was any source of civilization

[1] W. F. Cobb, *Origines Judaicæ*, 268.

powerful enough to have this influence on both Israel and Babylonia. The presumption that Babylonia had a prominent influence on Palestine long before Israelite codes were drawn up is one that grows stronger as time goes on."

III.

The Prophet.

And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.—Deut. xxxiv. 10.

1. To say that the history of Israel is a history of her prophets is to say that it is a history in which the moving and significant agent is Jehovah, whose mouthpiece and representative the prophets were: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets: the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos iii. 7); in other words, it is a history of revelation, for revelation implies that to certain individuals, and not immediately to the people at large, God makes Himself and His will known. The prophet is a man who, for clearness of insight, and purity of purpose, and knowledge of God, stands above the mass of his compatriots: and so, if Moses was a prophet, this is what we should expect him to be. And in the representations which we have of him, these are the qualities which we find. The writers to whom we owe his biography pictured him as a prophet, and described him accordingly. He speaks in Jehovah's name to Pharaoh; he uses the prophetic expressions, "Thus saith Jehovah," etc.; he leads Israel out of Egypt under a sense of God's directing hand; he hears inwardly God's words, and sees on Sinai manifestations of His presence; specifically prophetic teaching is communicated through him, or put into his mouth (Exod. iv. 22, vi. 7 (P), xv. 26, xix. 5–6, xxxiii. 19, xxxiv. 6–7, and elsewhere: Deut. *passim*); Jehovah is even represented as holding converse with him not by a vision or a dream, as with an ordinary prophet, but with some special and distinctive clearness (Num. xii. 6, 8), "as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. xxxiii. 11; cf. Deut. xxxiv. 10). Hosea, writing *c.* 740 B.C., expressly styles him a prophet (xii. 13).

2. In word and deed Moses showed himself an instrument of the Lord, unapproached by any other. He was the prophet without rival in respect of his intercourse with God and of what the Lord did and revealed by him. Of Moses it is said more frequently than of all other prophets together: "God talked with him," or "God spake to him." He is not only called "Servant of the Lord"—and, indeed, most frequently of all the men of God in the Old Testament,—"Servant of God," a designation used of him exclusively; but he is also called the greatest among the prophets on account of the intimacy and familiarity of the intercourse he enjoyed with God, and on account of the clear directness which in consequence distinguished the revelation given to him. Moreover, his mission consisted, not merely in being a channel of the Divine word, but in a unique, creative work—it was Moses who, through the Divine word, introduced the Divine rule in Israel.

¶ Popularly, Moses is known as the lawgiver. But, though he is called so by the Jews themselves, they never mean to imply that he was the *fons et origo* of the legislation to which his name is attached. There is no doubt that his Egyptian education specially prepared him for being the inspired medium of the Divine revelation. But it was not out of the resources of his own mind that the legislative code sprang. He was but a προφήτης, a spokesman for God. And it was not as a legislator like Solon or Justinian that he was said to have given the Law to Israel. Moses himself originated nothing. He was but the pen in the hand of the Almighty, communicating what he had already received.[1]

3. Although, as already stated, it may not be possible to point to any special details of the *cultus* which can be certainly ascribed to Moses, there is no doubt that in two important points he laid the foundations of Israel's religious development.

(1) In the first place he grasped for himself, and taught his fellow-tribesmen, the true significance of the events connected with the departure of the tribes from Egypt. He understood the bearing of these events on the character of Jehovah: His "holiness" or separateness from nature, His power, His willingness to redeem. In the great deliverance was involved a revelation which was necessarily the starting-point of a higher religion. Accordingly the central principle of his system was devotion to

[1] W. S. Bruce, *The Ethics of the Old Testament*, 73.

Jehovah as a gracious Being who had mercifully intervened to deliver an enslaved people from bondage; who had manifested His lordship over nature and His superiority to the deities of the heathen; who had adopted Israel and brought it into a filial relation to Himself. The loosely organized tribes were in fact welded into a nation by their common relationship to their Deliverer; and it has been justly remarked that this adhesion of a group of tribes to a single deity marked a step in advance from mere "henotheism" or "monolatry" towards monotheism. But it is even more important to notice that in the Mosaic conception of Jehovah lay "the promise and potency," not of mere monotheism, but of the ethical monotheism of the great prophets of the eighth century. For Jehovah revealed Himself in the events of the Exodus as the God, not of a particular territory, but of a people. Throughout the wanderings He walked with them in a tent and in a tabernacle. He led them onwards through the toils of their pilgrimage and brought them into the Land of Promise. He manifested in deeds His hatred of oppression and injustice, His longsuffering, His compassion, His readiness to forgive, His sustaining power and grace. Thus by kindling and keeping alive Israel's faith in its deliverer, Moses gave the tribes a rallying-point and a bond of union which could never be altogether lost to view.

(2) In the second place Moses taught the supreme importance in religion of righteous conduct. The deliverance from Egypt formed the basis of a covenant between Jehovah and the ransomed people. The Hebrews became servants of Jehovah. Redeemed by Him they were henceforth bound to His service. At the very outset they were subjected to an elementary moral code, and were reminded that a special character was the condition of covenant-fellowship with Jehovah. The Moral Law was seen to be the supreme tie between God and man; the foundation was securely laid upon which future legislation could be built up, and the great ethical principles were enunciated which the prophets afterwards developed. In this ethical basis of Mosaism lies its claim to be an important factor in the development of a universal religion. What was of permanent significance in Mosaism was the paramount place of the Moral Law. By placing the ten commandments in its forefront it made good its claim to be

an everlasting covenant; it taught and laid down the moral conditions of religious character, not only for its own time, but for all time. It was a step in religious history of which we can even now but imperfectly measure the greatness.

¶ Hebraism has its faults and dangers; still, the intense and convinced energy with which the Hebrew, both of the Old and of the New Testament, threw himself upon his ideal of righteousness, and which inspired the incomparable definition of the great Christian virtue, faith,—the substantiation of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,—this energy of devotion to its ideal has belonged to Hebraism alone. As our idea of perfection widens beyond the narrow limits to which the over-rigour of Hebraising has tended to confine it, we shall yet come again to Hebraism for that devout energy in embracing our ideal which alone can give to man the happiness of doing what he knows. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—The last word for infirm humanity will always be that. For this word, reiterated with a power now sublime, now affecting, but always admirable, our race will, as long as the world lasts, return to Hebraism; and the Bible, which preaches this word, will for ever remain, as Goethe called it, not only a national book, but the Book of the Nations.[1]

4. Let us sum up the character and life of Moses in the words of another grand and ardent soul, subdued, like his own, by the marvellous dealings with him of the Highest:—"This Moses, humble in refusing so great a service; resigned in undertaking, faithful in discharging, unwearied in fulfilling it; vigilant in governing his people; resolute in correcting them, ardent in loving them, and patient in bearing with them; the intercessor for them with the God whom they provoked—this Moses—such and so great a man—we love, we admire, and, so far as may be, imitate.[2]

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy.*
[2] Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, viii. 162.

AARON.

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AARON.

Is there not Aaron thy brother the Levite? I know that he can speak well.—Exod. iv. 14.

THERE can be no doubt as to the prominence of Aaron's career. In the great work of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt to the confines of the Promised Land, Aaron is second only to Moses. Although the younger man, Moses, in virtue of Divine appointment as well as of personal character, was the leader. He was even, as St. Paul tells the Galatians, a mediator between God and His people; he approached God on their behalf, and he conveyed to them God's revealed mind. But Aaron was the elder brother; and if in this case, as in that of the first Napoleon, the personal endowments and achievements of a younger man entirely reversed, even in the eye of mankind, the prestige attaching to earlier birth, there were still certain respects in which Aaron took the lead.

The two outward signs of his leadership were his power of oratory and his priesthood, and we may conveniently study his life under these two headings:—

I. Aaron the Prophet.

II. Aaron the Priest.

I.

THE PROPHET.

I know that he can speak well.—Exod. iv. 14.

And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God.—Exod. iv. 16.

And Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.—Exod. vii. 1.

1. In ancient times the office of a priest and that of a preacher were known to be entirely distinct. The firstborn in

every family was of course the priest in that family, by virtue of his primogeniture. But that gave him no right to be a preacher, or (in Scriptural language) a prophet. This office not infrequently belonged to the youngest branch of the family. For in this respect God always asserted His right to send by whom He would send. The eldest of the family was the priest, but any other might be the prophet. In the time of Moses, we are told, a very considerable change was made with regard to the priesthood. God then appointed that, instead of the firstborn in every house, a whole tribe should be dedicated to Him; and that all who afterwards ministered unto Him as priests should be of that tribe. Thus Aaron was of the tribe of Levi. Not many of the Levites were prophets, and if any were, it was a mere accidental thing. They were not such as being of that tribe.

2. God's own witnessing begins the history of Aaron: "I know that he can speak well." The words are not only Aaron's credentials; they argue also the place of eloquence in the Divine economy. Aaron, we are told, could speak well, while Moses was slow of speech. Thus Aaron was providentially appointed to be a spokesman for his brother—his prophet, his interpreter; literally, his mouthpiece. If Moses furnished the ideas and plans of action, Aaron clothed them in the language which would explain and recommend them. If Moses was the receiver of God's revelations, he made them known to others through his more eloquent brother. It was Aaron who spoke during the interviews with Pharaoh; it was Aaron who generally addressed the Israelites; Aaron was, indeed, the immediate worker of many of the miracles which preceded the Exodus. A striking illustration of Aaron's relation to Moses occurs during the critical battle with the Amalekites, when Aaron and Hur supported the weary hands of Moses as they were lifted up to procure the victory of Israel. It may happen that those who cannot themselves lead may be strictly indispensable to those who can. If Aaron could never have taken the place of Moses, Moses could not have been what he was without the sympathy and support of Aaron. If Moses ranks before Aaron, Aaron can never be dissociated from Moses: Aaron shares with Moses, though as a subordinate, the glory of having ruled and shaped the course and conduct of his countrymen at a time of un-

exampled difficulty, pregnant with the highest consequences to the religious future of the world. Samuel, when solemnly reviewing the history of his people, places them thus side by side. "It is the Lord," he says, "that advanced Moses and Aaron." "Thou leddest thy people," sings a later Psalmist, "like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

¶ We are not all the men of Moses-like genius and originality we might like to be. We are not all epoch-making, history-making, nation-making men. But we are what we are. We are what God has made us to be; and Moses himself is no more. And Moses may be as glad to meet me in my teachableness and in my love and in my reverence as I am to meet him in his magnificent supremacy and high solitariness of gift and of office.[1]

¶ That we are what we are brings obligation to be just that to others. The poet and the philosopher need each other, and each must hamper the other into some semblance of practicalness. The enthusiast finds not only his antithesis, but also his complement, in the phlegmatic person, and the good of society brings them together, one to keep the other from sailing off on wild vagaries and living on the film of day dreams, and he, in turn, to save the other from the curse of petrifaction and a failure to see the beauties of God's Universe. The singer lifts his brother from the shrieks and smells of a distracting mart, and leaves him some sweet strains to lighten toil as he plods along his more prosaic path, but the tradesman is needed to "pay the piper." The multitude may need the orator to voice the thoughts and feelings which they have had but could not utter, but the orator needs the flashing eyes and ears attent, to magnetize him and loose the torrent of his speech. Temerity and timidity, antipodes are they, and yet complements. For the timid man may hold his foolhardy brother back from rash and ruthless sacrifice—from martyrdom when martyrs are not needed—and the daring man may impart to his more fearful fellow such measure of his own spirit as will make of him a martyr when martyrdom is the price of righteousness and honour. The Calvinistic temperament needs its Arminian or Methodistic complement, and it will not hurt them at all to be in the same church, as we have them; for one will keep the other from despairing and doubt, and will be kept at work by him in spiritual exercise. The Ritualist will keep the Low Churchman from any tendency to slovenliness and disorder, and will be saved by him from a dead and unspiritual ceremonialism.[2]

[1] A. Whyte. [2] C. C. Pierce, *The Hunger of the Heart for Faith*, 198.

3. Aaron was the mouthpiece of Moses, but Moses was to Aaron as God. Here we have the second great point in Aaron's character. He was indeed indispensable to Moses, but Moses was still more indispensable to him. This has often been regarded as a grave fault in Aaron's character; but dependence on others is in itself no crime. Without Moses Aaron would probably never have been heard of, and he was quite justified in leaning to a certain extent on his stronger brother, if by that means he could complete his own life.

¶ A common man and a man of no gifts may be set in a place, and may have a calling of God that he cannot escape—a place and a calling which demand constant speaking and constant teaching at his hands—a minister, for instance. He may not be a great scholar or a great thinker himself, but he is set over those who are still less scholars, and who think still less. Now, what is such a man to do? What, but just to take Moses instead of God. What, but just to find out those great divines and other great authors who have been so immediately and richly gifted of God, and to live with them, and work with them, and make them his own, just as if God had given him all the great gifts He has given them. If I am a man of no learning and no originality, then I know men, both living and dead, who are; and they are all that, of God and under God, for me. And, if I had to travel barefoot to Horeb for them, if I had to sell my bed for them, at any cost I would have them. I would take no rest till I had found them, and then, as God said of Aaron, I would be glad when I saw them, and I would kiss them, and claim them as my own.[1]

4. Aaron's dependence on Moses, however, was so great that he tended to become a mere cypher; he had grown so accustomed to speaking for Moses that he had gradually lost the power of speaking for himself or of thinking for himself. He had every quality fitted for a great leader but one—tenacity of purpose. He was eloquent, shrewd, persuasive, pleasing in manner and address, endowed with the gifts that win popularity; but he was vacillating. He was perfectly sincere; he spoke the genuine sentiment which he entertained at the moment. But there was no guarantee that he would retain this sentiment at the end of the hour.

¶ The Bible's test of strength is tenacity of will. To be immovable like the great mountains, to be steadfast as the solid rocks,

[1] A. Whyte.

is ever its deepest aspiration. The things of nature which it admires are the things which it can think of as tenacious. The tree whose leaf "shall not wither," the city which "shall never be moved," the sun that "shall no more go down," the well of water "springing up eternally," the rainbow which shall be a sign "while the earth remaineth"—these are among its fondest fancies. And all these are to the Bible but the symbols of a deeper tenacity still—the endurance of a human heart, the steadfastness of a human purpose.[1]

(1) Aaron's weakness appeared especially on the occasion of the general apostasy, which took place during the absence of Moses on the mount, and when the people prevailed on Aaron to make for them a molten image. The older Jewish writers have laboured hard to vindicate Aaron from the charge of idolatry on this unhappy occasion. He yielded, some of them have alleged, to the people's wishes in the matter only that he might prevent their perpetrating the greater crime of laying violent hands on himself, should he resist their importunate demands; others, that he might protract the business till Moses should return and arrest its execution; and others still, that he might render the apostasy less complete, by proclaiming a festival to Jehovah, under the symbol of the calf, not to the calf itself. But we find no such palliations of his conduct in Scripture. With its wonted and stern impartiality it represents him as having contributed to bring a great sin upon the people, and made them naked to their shame before their enemies. Moses even speaks of having made his sin the subject of special intercession, as being one of peculiar aggravation. It was not, however, that Aaron prompted, or in any proper respect headed, the apostasy; it was only that he showed himself too facile in giving way to the evil, instead of using the authority and influence he possessed to withstand it.

(2) Such, too, appears to have been the part he acted on the next occasion of backsliding, when, along with Miriam, he yielded to a spirit of envy against Moses, and reproached him, both for having married an Ethiopian woman and for assuming too much authority. Miriam was plainly the ringleader in this more private outbreak, since she is mentioned first, and on her, too, as the more guilty one, the special judgment of Heaven comes down.

(3) The only other occasion on which Aaron is charged with

[1] G. Matheson.

open transgression was at that fearful tumult which arose in the desert of Sin, on account of the want of water, and which overcame even the stronger faith and more patient endurance of Moses. It betrayed a failure, if not in the principle of faith, at least in its calm and persistent exercise. And, happening as it did at a comparatively late period in the wilderness sojourn, and too palpably indicating an imperfect sanctification in the two leaders, they were, partly on their own account, and partly as a solemn lesson to others, alike adjudged to die, without being permitted to enter the Promised Land.

¶ What profound knowledge of human nature, what psychological intuition had Moses, who dared to let four generations of his weakened and demoralized followers perish, and merely serve as stepping-stones to the one destined to enter the Land of Promise and to settle down there in peace and plenty. What indomitable strength of purpose, what iron resolution must the man have possessed, who could wait thus calmly for results! Well might he feel that he had power to bid water flow from the barren rock, nay more, that in his righteous indignation he was justified in breaking the Tables of the Law, which he had just received, since it lay with him to inscribe them again. The light that flashed from his eyes was of more than mortal brilliancy; it was the sacred fire of enthusiasm, the glory that might illumine his face alone who knew himself to be in direct communication with the Deity. And well and wisely has that kindred soul, Italy's greatest sculptor, portrayed him thus, with the aureole of genius and titanic strength encircling his brow. Across the centuries these two, mystically allied by their superhuman energies and achievements, have met and understood one another, and the real Moses stands forever revealed to us in the form and features lent him here. It is strength in its highest manifestation which Michelangelo has symbolized, and we feel ourselves in presence of something that transcends our puny human faculties, —that springs from Faith, unswerving and unshaken.[1]

[1] *From Memory's Shrine: Reminiscences of Carmen Sylva*, 74.

II.

The Priest.

And bring thou near unto thee Aaron thy brother . . . that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.—Exod. xxviii. 1.
Aaron the saint of the Lord.—Ps. cvi. 16.
He is called of God, even as was Aaron.—Heb. v. 4.

Aaron's place in religious history is more distinctly measured, if we consider the great office to which he was called. He was the first of a long line of men who were at the head of what was for ages the only true religion in the world. He was the first of the high priests of the chosen people. That he was to be consecrated to this new office, and how he was to be consecrated, was a matter of special revelation to Moses; and in this Aaron illustrates the principle, which is as applicable to Christian as to Jewish times, that, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "no man taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron." Moses, indeed, inaugurated him; but in this Moses acted, not as the civil ruler of Israel, but as a mediator between God and His people, as the immediate organ of God's revelation of His will; so that in the view of later Israel, Moses as well as Aaron was among His priests, just as Samuel was among those that call upon His Name. If Aaron's consecration was of itself calculated to awe the mind of Israel, it was followed by high sanctions of his office which would have done so still more. His own sons, Nadab and Abihu, died for offering strange fire on the altar; and Korah's ambitious and selfish rebellion against his authority was visited with swift and unsparing punishment. No high priest in later days could occupy so great a place as did he who was the first of all; and when Aaron died, Israel, during the thirty days of mourning, must have felt that the greatest of Israelites but one had been withdrawn from sight.

1. Aaron was invested with the high priest's office although it was well known to the world that he had been guilty of compromise, that his was a vacillating spirit. A man rejected by the State as unfit to be a leader by reason of his vacillating spirit is by

that same State selected to be the head of a religious community within its own pale! Is there not in this picture an inartistic element, a breach of consistency which mars its beauty? We can understand that a stone once rejected should afterwards become the head of the corner, provided its rejection were found to be a mistake; but that a stone which was once rejected and which is still known to possess the defect attributed to it should be made the head of the corner—this is surely the fault of the builder!

We cannot explain this apparent lack of proportion, as some do, by insisting on the difference of qualifications requisite for a leader in the State and a leader in the Church. It is surely wrong to say that the ideal statesman could never become the ideal pastor without a fundamental change of character. The same qualifications are needed for both, and Aaron succeeded in the priesthood, not because he had failed as a leader of the people in civil affairs, but because he had added something to his former qualifications. The faculty of bending to the will of others no doubt helped him to a certain extent in his priesthood as it would have done in any other walk of life; but that alone could not have fitted him for his high office. This same characteristic had already worked to his undoing in the incident of the golden calf, and it is not to be supposed that it would now constitute itself his chief virtue, unless some fundamental change had taken place. The explanation of Aaron's fitness for the priesthood must then lie elsewhere.

¶ The essence of the priest is that he should believe himself, however humbly and secretly, to be set in a certain sense between humanity and God. He is conscious, if not of a mission at least of a vocation, as an interpreter of secrets, a guardian of mysteries; he would believe that there are certain people in the world who are called to be apostles, whose work it is to remind men of God, and to justify the ways of God to men. He feels that he stands, like Aaron, to make atonement; that he is in a certain definite relation to God, a relation which all do not share; and that this gives him, in a special sense something of the Divine and fatherly relation to men. In the hands of a perfectly humble, perfectly disinterested man, this may become a very beautiful and tender thing. Such a man, from long and intimate relations with humanity, will have a very deep knowledge of the human heart. He will be surprised at no weakness or frailty; he will be patient with all

perverseness and obduracy; he will be endlessly compassionate, because he will realize the strength and insistence of temptation; he will be endlessly hopeful, because he will have seen, a hundred times over, the flower of virtue and love blooming in an arid and desolate heart.[1]

¶ A select few had built a little Meeting-house at Ecclefechan, thatched with heath, and chosen them a Priest by name John Johnston,—the priestliest man I ever under any ecclesiastical guise was privileged to look upon. He, in his last years, helped me well in my Latin (as he had done many); and otherwise procured me far higher benefits. This peasant union, this little heath-thatched house, this simple Evangelist,—together constituted properly the "Church" of that district: they were the blessing and the saving of many: on me too their pious heaven-sent influences still rest, and live; let me employ them well. There was, in those days, a "Teacher of the People." He sleeps not far from my Father (who built his monument) in the Ecclefechan Churchyard; the Teacher and the Taught: "Blessed," I again say, "are the dead that die in the Lord. They do rest from their labours, and their works follow them."[2]

2. At the outset it certainly does seem remarkable that immediately after Aaron's great sin, and almost as though it had not occurred, God's fore-ordained purposes were carried out in Aaron's consecration to the office of high priesthood. The explanation lies in the fact of Aaron's repentance. The fall and the repentance made him one who could "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." Not the fall alone, but Aaron's repentance, made him fit to bear the high office to which God had called him.

Aaron's inward piety is attested by the blossoming of his rod. It was not the symbol of the official priest that was so honoured: the rod of the mere official never buds. It was the rod of a good shepherd of souls, the symbol of a spirit which was greater than office. The rod of the false priest is hard and dry; it may rule the devotees because it terrifies them. But the rod of the true priest is in flower; it wins through tenderness, it rules through its beauty of holiness. Aaron won the title of "saint of the

[1] A. C. Benson, *From a College Window*, 217.
[2] Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, i. 40.

Lord," not through his office, we may feel sure, but through the worth of his spirit, his readiness to give back to God what was God's. This appears still more strikingly in the narrative of his staying the plague: "He stood between the dead and the living." He ran, at the word of Moses, into the midst of the plague-stricken congregation, waving the incense, and making atonement for the people. Had he been a mere priest, he would have been courting death to stand there. As well might a rescuer go with naked lamp to the exploding coal-mine as an unworthy priest stand, in God's hour of wrath, to intercede for stricken souls. The mother who has sinned cannot pray for her child in the day of anguish; the minister who has been unfaithful cannot intercede as he should for those who go astray.

¶ John Foxe used to declare that both he and his people had got much more good of his sins than ever either he or they had got out of his good works.[1]

3. The hallowed dignity of the high priestly office of Aaron, great and honourable in itself, appears yet more so when viewed in the typical relationship which it bore to the priesthood of Christ. There were certain obvious differences between them, and in these differences marks of inferiority on the part of Aaron and his successors in office, which it became necessary to render prominent in New Testament Scripture, on account of the mistaken and extravagant views entertained regarding the religion of the old covenant by the pharisaical Jews of later times. For this reason, the priesthood of Melchizedek had to be exalted over the priesthood of Aaron, as foreshadowing more distinctly some of the higher and more peculiar elements of the Messiah's priestly function. But there was still both a closer and a more varied relation between the priesthood of Aaron and that of Christ. For it was a priesthood exercised in immediate connexion with the tabernacle, which the Lord had Himself planned, and chosen for His holy habitation—a priesthood which, in every feature of its character and calling, in the personal qualifications required for it, the vestments worn by it, the honours and privileges it enjoyed, and the whole train of occasional as well as of regular ministrations appointed for its discharge, had a divinely-ordained

[1] A. Whyte.

respect to the better things to come in Christ. All were, indeed, but shadows of these better things; yet they were shadows bearing throughout the form and likeness of what was hereafter to be revealed. And it cannot but be regarded as a high honour assigned to Aaron, that he should have been constituted the head of an order which had such lofty bearings, and was to find such a glorious consummation.

¶ Once, when his servant read in the Psalms the verse, "I have sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever," Luther said, "That is the most beautiful and most glorious verse in the whole Psalter; for herein God holds forth this Christ alone as our Bishop and High Priest, who Himself, and no other, without ceasing, makes intercession for His own with the Father. Not Caiaphas, nor Annas, nor Peter, nor Paul, nor the Pope; He, He alone shall be the Priest. This I affirm with an oath. 'Thou art a priest for ever.' In that saying every syllable is greater than the whole Tower of Babel. To this Priest let us cling and cleave. For He is faithful; He has given Himself for us to God, and holds us dearer than His own life. When we stand firm to Christ, there is no other God in heaven or on earth but One who makes just and blessed. On the other hand, if we lose Him from our heart and eyes, there is no other help, comfort, or rest."

¶ Our Lord's Priesthood, it seems to me, is almost invariably treated as though it were after the order of Aaron and not after the order of Melchizedek. In the Mosaic symbolism the Lamb is the symbol which represents the Priesthood of Christ in the days of His flesh. The High Priest in the Mosaic ritual is a subordinate figure, not the Central, which is the Lamb. The Priesthood of our Lord, *i.e.*, of the glorified Christ, which is the Priesthood of the Christian dispensation—the ministration of Life unto holiness, in contrast with the old dispensation, which was of sin unto death—is after the order of Melchizedek, the special characteristics of which are power, signified in royalty, and permanence, signified in inherent nature of Sonship, and exercised in Benediction—for the fulfilment of the promise or gospel preached to Abraham that through his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. The purpose of the Priesthood of the Lord is the fulfilment of the Divine will in the Salvation of the world, which purpose is affected through the exercise of inward judgment, which in the Christian dispensation is declared to be unto victory, *i.e.*, unto the utter condemnation of sin, and the salvation to the uttermost of the sinner. The sphere of the Lord's judgment is the heart, and the complete sanctification of the heart is the work of the Fire-

Baptism of the Holy Ghost. The Priesthood of our Lord now—*i.e.*, in the day of His Glory, when He, the Son of Man, is sitting on the Throne of His Glory—is no longer, as in the days of His flesh, on behalf of man towards God, the Priesthood of obedience to the Father's Will as our elder brother—but it is on behalf of God *towards men*, ministering to us the blessing of the Spirit of Holiness, whereby we are reconciled in heart and mind unto God, and made Holy even as He is Holy.[1]

[1] R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, xvi.

MIRIAM.

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MIRIAM.

For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of bondage; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.—Mic. vi. 4.

The history of the children of Israel, as described in the Hexateuch, is the history of the making of a nation. To make a nation, something more than common blood and language is necessary. The rabble of fugitive slaves that fled with Moses from Egyptian bondage had common blood, and at bottom, perhaps, a common tradition of faith. But it would be impossible to describe that undisciplined multitude as in any true sense a nation. Before they could be a nation, and play a nation's part, certain influences must be brought to bear upon them; common beliefs and hopes, sentiments and habits had to be developed. The Israelites furnished no more than the raw material which sympathy and skill might work to, or towards, a product of stable, resolute and enthusiastic national life. For so great and difficult a work certain forces were necessary.

1. The function of the *prophet* we see in Moses. Moses, indeed, was something more than a prophet. He was what many prophets were not—eminently practical-minded. He had not only a grasp of high principles, but an equally eminent skill in their application. He was, in short, a great lawyer and a great statesman as well as a great prophet. It was to his genius, and to his genius alone, that that extraordinary Church-State which existed so long an absolutely singular and unique feature of the world's life was due. But he had the prophet instinct and capacity as well. He was one of the elect who are habitually aware of the near reality of a personal God, and who enter into communion and awful familiarity with that unseen presence. The people that is truly inspired by some prophet voice with

thoughts like these will grow in dignity and power, and develop elements of strength which will go far to make it a nation.

2. The *priest*, as Aaron represented him, was the organizer of the religious life; and this organization was of the highest importance and value in dealing with a people which had been thoroughly disorganized and demoralized by long years of servitude to an idolatrous nation.

¶ The Priest, as I understand it, is a kind of Prophet, in him too there is required to be a light of inspiration, as we must name it. He presides over the worship of the people; is the Uniter of them with the Unseen Holy. He is the spiritual Captain of the people; as the Prophet is their spiritual King with many captains: he guides them heavenward, by wise guidance through this Earth and its work. The ideal of him is, that he too be what we can call a voice from the unseen Heaven; interpreting, even as the Prophet did, and in a more familiar manner unfolding the same to men. The unseen Heaven,—the "open secret of the Universe,"—which so few have an eye for! He is the Prophet shorn of his more awful splendour; burning with mild, equable radiance, as the enlightener of daily life. This, I say, is the ideal of a Priest. So in old times; so in these, and in all times. One knows very well that, in reducing ideals to practice, great latitude of tolerance is needful; very great. But a Priest who is not this at all, who does not any longer aim or try to be this, is a character—of whom we had rather not speak in this place.[1]

3. But there is a third whose gifts are from God for the cultivation of a deep and noble national spirit. "I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, *and Miriam.*" To the prophet and the priest there is added the *poet*, the inspired singer, the lyrist and melodist, whose office and function it is to take the national hopes and aspirations and wed them to music,

> Bequeathing honeyed words to Time,
> Embalmed in amber of eternal rhyme.

This was Miriam's gift. It was not the gift of the prophet: it was the gift of the poet. The prophet was above his audience; he moved for the most part in regions of thought and feeling

[1] Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Lect. iv.

inaccessible to the common people, and they stood in awe of him, admired and wondered from afar. Miriam's was a far inferior soul to that of Moses. But Miriam was far nearer to this people; she was more kith and kin with them than he. Her outbursts of song ring with human triumph and exultation. She sang as if the very life-blood of Israel were in her veins: and by her consciousness of that life, she made all Israel feel and know that they had a national unity, a national destiny, and a national mission. No one did more than she in the making of this nation.

¶ Poet and Prophet differ greatly in our loose modern notions of them. In some old languages, again, the titles are synonymous; *Vates* means both Prophet and Poet: and indeed at all times, Prophet and Poet, well understood, have much kindred of meaning. Fundamentally indeed they are still the same: in this most important respect especially, That they have penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the Universe; what Goethe calls "the open secret." "Which is the great secret?" asks one,—"The *open* secret"—open to all, seen by almost none! That Divine mystery which lies everywhere in all Beings, "the Divine Idea of the World, that which lies at the bottom of Appearance," as Fichte styles it; of which all Appearance, from the starry sky to the grass of the field, but especially the Appearance of Man and his work, is but the *vesture*, the embodiment that renders it visible. This Divine mystery *is* in all times and in all places; veritably is.

Whoever may forget this Divine mystery, the *Vates*, whether Prophet or Poet, has penetrated into it: is a man sent hither to make it more impressively known to us. That always is his message; he is to reveal that to us—that sacred mystery which he more than others lives ever present with. While others forget it, he knows it;—I might say, he has been driven to know it; without consent asked of *him*, he finds himself living in it, bound to live in it. Once more, here is no Hearsay, but a direct Insight and Belief; this man too could not help being a sincere man! Whosoever may live in the shows of things, it is for him a necessity of nature to live in the very fact of things. A man once more, in earnest with the Universe, though all others were but toying with it. He is a *Vates*, first of all, in virtue of being sincere. So far Poet and Prophet, participators in the "open secret," are one. With respect to their distinction again: The *Vates* Prophet, we might say, has seized that sacred mystery rather on the moral side, as Good and Evil, Duty and Prohibition;

the *Vates* Poet on what the Germans call the aesthetic side, as Beautiful, and the like. The one we may call a revealer of what we are to do, the other of what we are to love. But indeed these two provinces run into one another, and cannot be disjoined.[1]

I.

By the Nile.

And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.—Exod. ii. 4.

The Bible story of Miriam is given in three scenes. The first has the river Nile for a background. We see her watching the little cradle-boat among the long reeds of the Nile—a dark-eyed girl of perhaps fifteen years of age, clever, sensible, and self-possessed. All the world knows the interesting story connected with the preservation of the child Moses: the resolve on the part of this Hebrew mother to commit her little one to the ark of bulrushes and to place it there in that sheltered nook of the river where the great princess and her maidens came each day; for something told her that the helpless babe would appeal to the heart of the heathen princess.

¶ Of the three females in the transaction—the mother, the princess, and the young sister—the last is by far the most advanced in mind. The ark left to itself would have only postponed the catastrophe. The princess left to herself would have saved the child's life at the expense of its nationality. But little Miriam by a stroke of precocious genius preserved the nationality as well as the life of the child Moses. The mother and the princess were both actuated by tenderness of feeling. Miriam had also tenderness of feeling, but it was blended with something of a stronger mould—a power of suggestion, a depth of shrewdness, a fertility and readiness of resource, which placed her even in girlhood on a height entirely her own.[2]

[1] Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Lect. ii.

[2] G. Matheson, *Representative Women of the Bible*, 135.

II.

At the Red Sea.

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.—Exod. xv. 20.

1. For many years there is a dropping of the curtain. When it rises again it is upon a new scene. Egypt has vanished, and another world has dawned. The slaves have become free. Again they stand upon the banks of a water; but it is no longer the water of the Nile river; it is that of the Red Sea. They stand upon these banks triumphant; they have emancipated themselves from the Egyptian thraldom. The military strength of Egypt had been in pursuit of them, and the proud host had just been engulfed in the waters of the Red Sea. It was at that moment, when the first amazement and wonder had passed, that the voice of Miriam rang out in the camp, and, timbrel in hand, she sounded out the notes of a noble song of exultation and thankfulness.

Even to-day, thousands of years after, we feel the spirit of the scene, and we seem to feel the surging swell of triumph as Miriam sang out that triumphal song, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." This is the woman whose name lives in the Hebrew history, emerging from that stormy and troubled time as a figure of singular courage, of impassioned utterance, of intense patriotism. It was as if the genius of the Hebrew people had incarnated itself in a noble female figure and had broken into fine audibility, and through its voice and song the whole camp was thrilled and inspired and uplifted.

2. When one has read over carefully this first outburst of the nation's heart and life, this earliest National Anthem, although we are not expressly told the authorship, the conviction grows that it is from the pen of Miriam. We know that women had to appear and do duty on the east side of the sanctuary, organized just like the Levites. Proper sacerdotal functions, whether higher or lower, cannot be ascribed to them: it was characteristic

of the whole of the religion of Jehovah to confine these to men. But we know from other sources that dances accompanied by singing were performed at the sanctuary by women; and if numerous women from each of the tribes always took part in these dances on festivals there must still have been some constantly at the sanctuary who should know how to lead the dances, and they may have been the same as those who daily performed the sacred music there. That women who sang and played lived there we know as a certainty, as well as that the culture of the Muses was left chiefly to the women down to the days of David. The singing and playing Miriam, therefore, clearly furnishes us with the original type of these women about the sanctuary.

3. We cannot, of course, go into any analysis of this poem; it is a war song with a religious basis and a religious spirit pervading it. It belongs to a very early period, and yet there are passages in it—passages like that second verse, "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him; my father's God, and I will exalt him"—that link this Old Testament Mary to the New Testament Mary, and that make the "Magnificat" of the one not altogether unworthy of a place beside the "Magnificat" of the other. Not as a timid, trembling woman, but as a leader of devotion, did Miriam sing in the chorus of triumph. Both a poetess and a fervent prophetess, Miriam has since then inspired to song and enthusiasm greater hosts of women than those who rehearsed the triumph of the Red Sea. And the bands of singers who have followed her reach the highest note only when their theme is the same as hers—"Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."

¶ After the defeat of the Scottish army at Dunbar "The Lord General made a halt," says Hodgson, "and sang the Hundred-and-seventeenth Psalm," till our horse could gather for the chase. Hundred-and-seventeenth Psalm, at the foot of the Doon Hill: there we uplift it, to the tune of Bangor, or some still higher score, and roll it strong and great against the sky:

O give ye praise unto the Lord,
All nati-ons that be;
Likewise ye people all, accord
His name to magnify!

For great to-us-ward ever are
His lovingkindnesses;
His truth endures forevermore:
The Lord O do ye bless![1]

III.

In the Wilderness.

Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Miriam, by the way as ye came forth out of Egypt.—Deut. xxiv. 9.

1. Again the scene changes, and a new act of the drama opens. We find ourselves in a totally different environment from either of the foregoing. We have passed from the Nile river; we have passed from the Red Sea; we have entered into the heart of the wilderness. And we have left behind also the song of triumph. A cloud has settled over the singer—a moral cloud.

That long wilderness experience was a great trial, especially to the leaders of the people. It tried their faith, it tried their temper and enthusiasm. They found it difficult to keep alive those early ideals associated with the birth of the nation and with the great experiences of Sinai. And probably it indicated a lapse on the part of Moses to take to wife a Cushite or Ethiopian woman. It was so regarded at least by his sister Miriam. It was a tremendous blow to her that Moses should bring into the family circle an alien woman. And, clearly enough, to Miriam's mind this was not only a retrograde step on the part of Moses but a lapse from grace, a betrayal of the Divine trust reposed in him as leader of Israel.

2. Miriam's pain is all the greater because she thinks she is shut out from a place in the councils of the nation to which her great gifts entitle her. Under this jealous feeling her love almost turns to hatred. She wins over Aaron to her faction, and threatens to break up the camp unless more regard is paid to her place and position in the councils of the people. Such seems to have been the temptation which made Miriam chide with Moses,

[1] Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, iii. 37.

saying, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?"

¶ In one pathetic passage of Henry Varley's autobiographical memoranda, there is mention—though I suppress the name—of a neighbouring pastor at Notting Hill, specially gifted and qualified as an expositor of the Scriptures. His ministry was attracting some members of my father's congregation. He missed them frequently from their seats in the Tabernacle. "Henry Varley did not like this," he writes. To his intense self-loathing, he found that the "green-eyed monster" of jealousy had its claws upon his soul. "I shall never forget," he continues, "the sense of guilt and sin that possessed me over that business. I was miserable. Was I practically saying to the Lord Jesus, 'Unless the prosperity of Thy Church and people comes in this neighbourhood by *me*, success had better not come'? Was I really showing inability to rejoice in another worker's service? I felt that it was sin of a very hateful character. I never asked the Lord to take away my life either before or since; but I did then, unless His grace gave me victory over this foul image of jealousy." The suggestion inevitably arises of the possibility of vacant pulpits if preachers jealous of other preachers' success were to pray to die, and their prayers were answered.[1]

3. It does not appear that Moses attempted to defend himself against his brother and sister. In his meekness he was unwilling to argue his own case, but it is significantly stated, "the Lord heard it." From that moment the controversy was between Him and these two, not between them and their brother; he might be ready to let the accusation pass, but the Lord was not. Suddenly the three were called out "unto the tabernacle of the congregation," and when they came out "the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud," and Aaron and Miriam had to come forth.

It was true that Aaron and Miriam had both been recognized by the Lord and given a position of authority in connexion with the conduct of affairs in Israel. But although the Lord would make Himself known to any prophet and would "speak unto him in a dream," He reserved a more intimate fellowship and clearer revelation of Himself for His servant Moses. Moses was *not* like any ordinary prophet, although in his extreme meekness he would not vindicate his own position. He "was faithful," or approved,

[1] *Henry Varley's Life-Story*, 235.

"to him that appointed him," not merely in any one special matter, but "in all the house," of Jehovah, that is, in *all* pertaining to the Kingdom of God. And the Lord now vindicated His servant. Miriam and Aaron were left with the stern challenge, "Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

¶ Make no great account who is for thee or against thee but mind only the present duty and take care that God be with thee in whatsoever thou doest. Have a good conscience and God will defend thee, for he whom God will help no man's perverseness shall be able to hurt. If thou knowest how to hold thy peace and to suffer, without doubt thou shalt see the help of the Lord. He knoweth the time and the way to deliver thee, therefore must thou resign thyself to Him. To God it belongeth to help and to deliver from all confusion.[1]

4. Miriam and Aaron were both severely rebuked, but the chief punishment fell upon Miriam. "The cloud removed from over the tent; and, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow." Aaron understood the sin when he saw the result of it, and immediately he appealed to Moses for forgiveness that his sister might "not be as one dead," because leprosy was simply a living death. It is beautiful to see how quickly the man who was silent under reproach became eloquent on behalf of the one who had wronged him, and made use of his privilege to "speak mouth to mouth" with the Lord in pleading for her recovery. "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee."

The healing and forgiveness sought for Miriam were not refused. Yet God is represented as resenting the speedy oblivion of the offence on account of which the leprosy had been sent and the Divine displeasure incurred. There was cause to apprehend that the whole matter might be too quickly wiped out and forgotten, and that the sinners, reinstated in their old position, might think too lightly of their offence. This detrimental suddenness God takes measures to prevent. Had an earthly father manifested his displeasure as emphatically as God had now shown His, Miriam could not for a time have held up her head. God desires that the shame which results from a sense of His displeasure should last at least as long. He therefore enjoins something like

[1] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, Bk. ii. ch. 2 (*Of Lowly Submission*), p. 89 in Benham's edition.

a penance; He removes His stroke, but provides for the moral effects of it being sufficiently impressed on the spirit to be permanent. Miriam was subjected to a temporary disgrace. She was expelled from the congregation of the Lord for seven days. She was placed during that time in the position of a moral leper who could not be touched without spiritual uncleanness. She had to bear the sorrow of seeing Israel's march to the Promised Land arrested—arrested on her account during the days of her banishment. These were among the things that Miriam could not forget and never did forget; and we may say of her, what is said later of one of the kings of Israel, that she "went softly" all the days of her life.

Miriam came out of her cloud with an unstained reputation. She resumed her leadership by the side of her two brothers. She lost nothing of her respect among the ranks of Israel. She kept an honoured name not only through the marches of the wilderness but through the long march of Jewish history, and men ever spoke of her as Miriam the Prophetess.

¶ "Oh, my Father! keep me humble. Help me to have respect towards my fellow-men—to recognize their several gifts as from Thee. Deliver me from the diabolical sins of malice, envy, or jealousy, and give me hearty joy in my brother's good, in his work, in his gifts and talents; and may I be truly glad in his superiority to myself, if Thou art glorified! Root out all weak vanity, all devilish pride, all that is abhorrent to the mind of Christ. God, hear my prayer! Grant me the wondrous joy of humility, which is seeing Thee as All in All![1]

5. We hear nothing more of Miriam till we come to the twentieth chapter of Numbers. The children of Israel are nearing the end of their wanderings; they have entered upon their last year; they have reached Kadesh, in the upper part of the wilderness of Sin; and all that is told us of the end is in two sentences: "And the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there."

Miriam never reached the Promised Land; she died in the wilderness. She died when the goal was almost won, at the opening of the fortieth year of Israel's wanderings—by only a very short time predeceasing her two brothers. It seems a sad

[1] *Memoir of Norman Macleod*, ii. 318.

thing to have fainted so near to the crown. Yet a "death in the desert" was a fitting close for such a life as hers. Miriam was a bird of song, and songs are sweetest in the night. Miriam was meant to sing in the wilderness and for the wilderness; and when the wilderness was past her work was done. Her mission was to cheer the desert; and when the end of the desert was reached her task was over.

Sad doom, to know a mighty work in hand,
Which shall from all the ages honour win;
Upon the threshold of this work to stand,
Arrested there, while others enter in.

And this was theirs; they saw their fellows bound
To fields of fame which they might never share;
And all the while within their own hearts found
A strength that was not less, to do and dare:

But knew that never, never with their peers
They should salute some grand day's glorious close,
The shout of triumph ringing in their ears,
The light of battle shining on their brows.

Sad doom:—yet say not Heaven to them assigned
A lot from all of glory quite estranged:
Albeit the laurel which they hoped to bind
About their brows for cypress wreath was changed.

Heaven gave to them a glory stern, austere,
A glory of all earthly glory shorn;
With firm heart to accept fate's gift severe,
Bravely to bear the thing that must be borne;

To see such visions fade and turn to nought,
And in this saddest issue to consent;
If only the great work be duly wrought,
That others should accomplish it, content.[1]

[1] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 348.

BALAAM.

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BALAAM.

Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (R.V. the hire of wrong-doing).—2 Pet. ii. 15.

1. BALAAM is the subject of a very remarkable story in connexion with the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. The present narrative has arisen from the combination of several more or less ancient traditions. According to the latest, embodied in the Priestly Code (P), and contained in Num. xxxi. 8–16. (cf. Rev. ii. 14), Balaam was a Midianitish counsellor, who persuaded his people to seduce the Israelites by means of certain immoral rites. This is probably to be connected with the great sin of Baal-peor (Num. xxv.), or, to be more accurate, with the affair of Cozbi, which has been combined with the story of Baal-peor, the former being connected with the Midianites, the latter with the Moabites. In revenge for this, Balaam was afterwards slain with the princes of Midian (Num. xxxi., Jos. xiii.). It has been conjectured that this story arose partly out of a difficulty on the part of the Priestly narrator in conceiving of a heathen being an inspired prophet of God, partly from the need of accounting for the great sin of the Israelites. It is, however, very doubtful whether this story belongs to the earliest form of P, and it is assigned by Kuenen to the very latest redactor. It is significant that Rev. ii. definitely connects the immorality with sacrificial rites to heathen gods, a fact implied, but not distinctly stated, by P.

The more ancient and far more picturesque story is that contained in Num. xxii.–xxiv. According to this, Balaam is a prophet from Pethor, which is by the Euphrates, a place otherwise unknown, who is bribed by Balak, king of Moab, to come and pronounce a curse on the Israelites. Balaam earnestly endeavours to carry out Balak's wishes, but by Divine inspiration pronounces a blessing instead of a curse. He is dismissed by Balak, and returns to his home, and is heard of no more. It is obvious that

this story has no point of contact with that of P, and can be reconciled with it only by modifying or eliminating ch. xxiv. If Balaam had returned to his home, he could not be in the Midianitish camp immediately afterwards. It is generally admitted that Num. xxii.–xxiv. belongs to the composite narrative known as JE. But there is some difference of opinion as regards the critical analysis of the passage.

(1) The most important difference in the stories is the contrast which they present in the character of Balaam. In J there is nothing reproachful in his conduct. He acts up to his light with perfect consistency. But the Balaam of E is of a much lower order. He has indeed a higher perception of the moral beauty of righteousness. He can say with all sincerity, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (Num. xxiii. 10). But, in spite of such noble sentiments, the Balaam of E is a selfish, grasping man. He covets the rewards of Balak, and is restrained from taking them only by a sordid fear of God, who could make the consequence of so doing worse than losing them. He is not content to know God's will, but tries by every means in his power to cajole God into changing His mind, or, in other words, making wrong right.[1]

(2) It has been pointed out that to draw from the story a consistent character sketch is not only impracticable, because the story itself is not consistent, but also beside the mark. The author's purpose is not to make a character sketch and deliver an ethical lesson; what he is aiming at is to contrast the religion of the Gentile world, embodied in Balaam, with the religion of Israel. His motive is perfectly clear, though it has generally been hidden (or at least cast into the shade) by undue prominence given to what is not a matter of leading interest with the writer, viz., the character of Balaam. Balak, except in so far as he represents Moab, and Balaam are in reality subordinate figures in the story; the protagonists are Israel and Moab; the overruling thought is Jehovah's power to defend His people and His purposes of good concerning them, and the fatal madness of those who, through them, oppose Him.

(3) The same motive governs the two different stories which have been brought together by the editor (JE); and it was

[1] F. H. Woods, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 233.

carefully preserved in the story as it left his hands. Drawing on both sources (J and E), the editor is indifferent to incongruities, produced by his method, which strike the modern reader; but he is careful so to combine his material as to give fuller effect to the leading motive. Not once or twice only, but thrice in this final form of the story, does Balak persist in his attempt to get Israel cursed; and at each attempt his own doom approaches nearer: for, as the editor has arranged them, the poems rise to a climax. In the fourth unsolicited poem the climax is reached. Moab itself is singled out by name as about to perish before Israel; and on this note the episode in JE closed. All that followed it was the simple statement that Balaam and Balak went their respective ways.

(4) The subsequent fortunes of the seer were irrelevant to the story. But the curiosity out of which the Haggadic Midrash on the Old Testament sprang wanted to know more both of his fate and of his character and personality; and after its wont it created what it wanted, till in the course of time it gave Philo material for his lengthy and spirited description. In particular, the exclusive spirit of a later age could not tolerate the appearance of a true prophet of God among the heathen; it consequently took care to represent him in an unfavourable light. Such is the general tendency, though even later there are rare exceptions to it.

Some regret may be felt on the ground that such a critical analysis of Balaam's story destroys its value as the study of an instructively composite character. But this is not so much so as appears at first sight. The great sermon of Bishop Butler, for example, depends almost entirely on the narrative of E. His allusion to P's story as part of Balaam's career does not affect his main argument much more than the words of Micah erroneously put by him into Balaam's mouth. The real value of his sermon arises out of his insight into human nature and motive. On the other side, it is only fair to state that the critical process removes at least one very serious moral difficulty—that, as the narrative now stands, God allows Balaam to go on certain conditions and, before the conditions have been violated, is angry, and punishes him for acting on this permission.[1]

[1] F. H. Woods, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 234.

2. One may accept this correction of the customary treatment of this scripture, and yet, none the less, and even under the light of the new critical understanding of the record, return to the older point of view. It is true that there is one Balaam of the Jehovist, and another of the Elohist, and another of the Priestly writer. We have to face not only the fact that there are three different traditions, but the fact that the compiler of JE combined the first two so closely that they are almost inextricable, and that the ultimate compiler of the Hexateuch, perhaps with a deeper insight into human nature than some of his modern interpreters, has had no scruple in combining the three and treating them all as features of one and the same character. The terrible warning of the character remains untouched, an awful lesson to all religious men who hold parley with suggestions of avarice; an appalling portrait of the double-hearted man, unstable in all his ways; a warning especially to the preacher that no beauty of utterance, however flawlessly beautiful, no heralding of truth to others, however unqualifiedly true, is sufficient to prevent a man from being himself a castaway. It concerns us little to analyse the work of Elohist, Jehovist, Editor, if only we have seen by their joint work a Balaam who is of a type that does exist; if only he mirrors to our eye a moral situation and a spiritual fortune which has been, or may come to be, the situation and fortune of ourselves or a brother man.

¶ My tastes are with the aristocrat, my principles with the mob. I know how the recoil from vulgarity and mobocracy, with thin-skinned, over-fastidious sensitiveness, has stood in the way of my doing the good I might do. My own sympathies and principles in this matter are in constant antagonism, and until these can be harmonized true Christianity is impracticable. A greater felt the same—Milton; but he worked far more ardently for his principles. To give a less august precedent: poor Balaam was in a similar antagonism, with tastes, love of poetry, etc., on the side of Balak; principles on the side of Israel; only gold inclined the scales to the wrong side, which happily is not my temptation.[1]

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 383.

I.

In the Hand of the Lord.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!—Num. xxiii. 10.

1. We know not whence the story of Balaam was obtained—from a Moabitish or an Assyrian source; some facts only Balaam himself could have recorded; others, such as the speaking ass and the vision of the angel, are essentially pagan, not Israelite fancies. The mysteries that surround the origin of Balaam, the sources of his inspiration, his means and methods of divination may all be passed by. He suddenly appears on the page of sacred history as a diviner whose fame had spread from the Euphrates to the Jordan, and probably farther. The Israelites, toughened physically and morally by their long sojourn in the desert, and now well consolidated into a nation, are beginning to emerge from their southern retreat, and to betray their designs upon the regions bordering on the Jordan. They have met and defeated the desert tribes, and are now threatening Moab, which lies in their way. Its politic ruler, Balak, thoroughly appreciated his danger, and measured the natural possibilities of defence with serious foreboding. Stronger kings than he had fallen, and the rumour of a powerful tribal deity who had done wonders in Egypt in his father's day, and still accompanied the invaders to victory, filled him and his chieftains with apprehension and dismay. He has learned that the Israelites are led by Moses, a prophet of Jehovah, and that his prayers in the battle against Amalek secured the victory. He will see what of the same sort he can do on his side. Hundreds of miles away, near the head waters of the Euphrates, there lived another prophet of Jehovah, whose reputation filled the whole region. Balak sends for him. The Israelites have a prophet; he will have a prophet. He sees in the battles hitherto fought a weight not belonging to the battalions, a spiritual force that won the victory; he will employ that force on his side. Israel had a prophet who blessed them; he would employ a prophet who should curse them.

2. Balaam was a foreigner, a Gentile, scion of an idolatrous race. He is, however, rather a diviner than a prophet; he is the soothsayer, whose fame spreads throughout the East, who has a supernatural power to bless and to curse, to whom ambassadors come with the rewards of divination in their hands, who takes his post on the mountain-top that thence his curse may be effective, who goes out to meet with enchantments, to whom the *Elohim* speak. But it was not simply as a magician of note that Balak resorted to him; it was as one who affected the worship of Jehovah, and who was therefore thought likely to have had some special influence in obtaining a curse on the children of Israel from their own national God, whose power had hitherto been exerted on their behalf. He was of heathen descent and dwelt among heathen, and yet he had an extraordinary knowledge of the true God, whose will he interpreted to his fellow-men. Men recognized that those whom he cursed were cursed.

Balaam, then, is to be regarded as one reared in the midst of falsehood, on whom the light is beginning to dawn, and who really appreciates its beauty and worth. Balaam was in a transitional stage, a position he could not long maintain; one from which he must advance into full light, or creep back to bury himself once more in his old darkness. Entangled as he was in the meshes of incantations and magic, he had an incipient knowledge and fear of God, which might have led on to the full character of a genuine prophet had it not been resisted.

¶ Brought up in the irrational methods of heathenism, accustomed to believe in the omnipotence of rites and spells, and anxious to magnify his office, Balaam has yet a certain openness of mind to facts, a capacity of his own to read their consistency and rhythm and a courage to face their consequences, which prevail over the prejudices and interests by which he is swayed. There is a primitive integrity of mind and a primitive reverence in the man which grips our respect—grips our respect and also lets us see how God in all ages has chosen and equipped His prophets. Nor is our appreciation of this mind, groping so far back there on the confines of light and darkness, lessened by the fact that it did not rise clear of all the passion of its time, but is described (Num. xxiv. 15, 16) as working heavily in trance or ecstasy.

Rede of Balaam, Beór's son,
Rede of the eye-sealed (?) man:
In vision he sees the Almighty,
Falling yet open of eye (?).

In Israel the beginnings of prophecy were also in trance; and uncontrollable excitement has characterized the origins of genuinely religious movements within Christianity itself. Balaam has the servile temper which does not understand the fulness of the truth that has come to him, and staggers beneath it. He grovels under the approach of his convictions, but he honestly utters them when they arrive. If I may take another Arabian prophet, upon much the same stage of development as Balaam, I would remind you that Mohammed behaved very similarly under the earliest impulses of his calling—a bemused, ecstatic, perhaps epileptic man: yet he lived to bring all Arabia to his feet.

For this is the kind of man whom, though blinded and prostrate, God shall one day call to stand up and send upon his way in full control of his faculties. . . . In Balaam we have one end of that long course of gradual revelation of which the other is reached in Christ and His disciples.[1]

¶ It seems to be certainly implied that God did speak to Balaam, open his eyes, unfold to him things far off in the future. Although many cases might be adduced which go to prove that an acute man of the world, weighing causes and tracing the drift of things, may show wonderful foresight, yet the language here used points to more than that. It seems to mean that Divine illumination was given to one beyond the circle of the chosen people, to one who from the first was no friend of God and at the last showed himself a malicious enemy of Israel. And the doctrine must be that any one who, looking beneath the surface of things, studying the character of men and peoples, connects the past and the present and anticipates events which are still far off, has his illumination from God. Further it is taught that in a real sense the man who has some conception of Providence, though he is false at heart, may yet, in the sincerity of an hour, in the serious thought roused at some crisis, have a word of counsel, a clear indication of duty, a revelation of things to come which others do not receive.[2]

3. When the elders of Moab and Midian who were selected as envoys had arrived at Pethor and delivered their errand, Balaam bade them stay till he had ascertained the will of God; and when

[1] George Adam Smith, in *The Expositor*, 8th Ser., v. 8.
[2] R. A. Watson, *The Book of Numbers*, 267.

he learned, through a vision, that God disapproved of the journey and the curse, since the Israelites were a blessed nation, he declined to accompany the messengers. On hearing their reply, Balak sent a second and still more weighty embassy, promising Balaam the highest distinctions and rewards, if he yielded to his wishes. But Balaam declared to the nobles that no treasures or honours, however splendid, could induce him to act against the command of God, whom therefore he would again consult. This time he received permission to proceed to Moab, on condition, however, that he should strictly adhere to God's suggestions; after which he entered upon the journey together with the ambassadors.

The situation of Balaam at this point of the narrative is a common one, allowing for the differences of time and custom and the accidentals of life. It is simply the situation of a man who is keenly desirous of doing something which he knows to be wrong, and who seeks to reconcile a real conscientiousness with his desire. Balak offers him things which his heart covets, if he will go to him and curse for him the Israelites. Balaam is persuaded in his own mind that he cannot do this as things stand, that it will be contrary to the will of God, who has blessed Israel; and yet he would fain earn the reward in some way without being absolutely false. He would not accept once for all the plain intimation of God's will and the simple demands of duty; but at the same time he is determined not to disobey the dictates of conscience. Instead of sending the envoys away the second time, he bade them wait in the hope that he might be able to get a more favourable answer. He seemed to succeed; for he did receive permission to go. "God said unto Balaam, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them." Nothing was really altered. He knew he was not allowed to curse instead of bless. But he still hoped that some further concession might be granted which would enable him to earn the reward. He was only entering into temptation, getting nearer to it, playing with it, going with open eyes into a situation which would inevitably make it more difficult for him to be true. The permission he received to go did not change the facts of the case, did not alter God's will, could not alter it; it only brought Balaam himself into deeper waters, and gave him a harder battle to fight with temptation; it was a long step towards the ultimate degradation and the final plunge.

The incident of the miraculous voice of the ass brought him to a sense of his sin; and he said to the opposing angel, "I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again." However, he is bidden to proceed on his mission. God is displeased with him, yet He appears to go with him, and to allow him to proceed in the crooked ways of his covetousness.

¶ I heard a preacher take for his text: "Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee?" I wondered what he would make thereof, fearing he would starve his auditors for want of matter. But hence he observed:

1. The silliest and simplest, being wronged, may justly speak in their own defence.

2. Worst men have a good title to their own goods. Balaam a sorcerer; yet the ass confesseth twice he was his.

3. They who have done many good offices, and fail in one, are often not only unrewarded for former service, but punished for that one offence.

4. When the creatures, formerly officious to serve us, start from their wonted obedience (as the earth to become barren, and air pestilential) man ought to reflect on his own sin as the sole cause thereof.

How fruitful are the seeming barren places of Scripture. Bad ploughmen, which make balks of such ground. Wheresoever the surface of God's word doth not laugh and sing with corn, there the heart thereof within is merry with mines, affording, where not plain matter, hidden mysteries.[1]

¶ Nine days before his death, Dr. Berry preached a sermon on "Mistaken Interpretations of Experience," based on the words: "And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him" (Num. xxii. 21, 22). The points of an ever-memorable discourse, one of the most powerful that Berry ever preached, were these: While Balaam saddled an ass to carry him, God commissioned an angel to obstruct him; in what followed, owing to his wilful blindness, he mistook the beneficence of an angel for the stupidity of an ass; and not until he ceased buffeting his beast of burden did he awake to the presence of a minister of instruction. It was not the ass, but the angel, that

[1] Thomas Fuller, *Good Thoughts in Worse Times.*

stopped him; yet being such as he was and in such furious temper at obstruction, he persistently and repeatedly mistook the angel for an ass. The beginning of all mistaken interpretations of life must be traced to the false ideas with which we start—false estimates of life's resources in liberty and self-sufficiency, false ideas of life's meaning and intent, false motives and aims in life's pursuits. Balaam had calculated and provided for all the requirements of his journey. He had counted, weighed, estimated, anticipated the facts of the situation as they presented themselves to his notice. He had looked behind, around, ahead. Why should he not feel confident and complacent? So asks worldly wisdom, but the wisdom that is more than worldly detects an omission. Balaam forgot to look above. This initial blunder was the elimination of God out of life's equation. Do not most men live in an atmosphere that magnifies the ass and hides the angel? Life is not independent and self-sufficient, but dependent and under government; it is not given us for selfishness and luxury, but for discipline, for the formation of character, for the attainment of virtue and power; its inclosing and completing circumference is not to be found in a small rim round the centre, but in a circle, and sweeps through eternity and reaches out after the infinite! Begin life with any other views, from any other point, in any other spirit, and as sure as Balaam's ass crushed his master's foot against the wall, as sure as Balaam met with a check that filled him with dismay and temper, so will you be turned upon and rebuked by the ass of your own conceit, on which you have chosen to ride through life to fortune.[1]

4. The scene of action is reached at last. Surrounded by the princes of Moab, the weird seer stands above the craggy steep beside the seven reeking altars. Willing to curse, and ready at heart to fulfil the contract and earn the honours and rewards of blasting malediction, Balaam is borne up perforce on wings of rich and rare beatitude. His higher mood o'ermasters him. Prophet and poet blot out the charlatan; the word which God has put in his mouth, that must he speak. "How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" And then as with a deep sigh of discontentment at his own false position which yet he will not abandon, he adds, as though it

[1] S. Drummond, *Charles A. Berry*, 205.

were to himself, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

Balaam next turns to enchantments; he tries to elicit the curses of the demons; if he cannot bend the immortals, he will move hell from beneath. But enchantment is vain; malediction is but babblement where God's benediction rests. The future is as assured as the present. Righteous Israel must triumph. Like a great lion he shall lift himself, and cease not till he devour the prey and drink the blood of the slain: "God hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." Balak and his princes are utterly disconcerted. The royal anger burns fiercely, and utters itself in scornful remonstrance, but the soul of the seer is on fire; he must speak forth its hot burden; Balak cannot choose but hear. Higher still into the atmosphere of prophecy rises the quickened soul of the son of Beor. Visions of future glory for Israel are unfolded in rapid and blinding flashes of unearthly light. A king is described higher than Agag. A star gleams out of Jacob, a sceptre rises out of Israel that smites the corners of Moab and blasts the children of Seth. Amalek, first of the nations, perishes. The Kenites are seen led from their fastnesses to the bondage of Asshur. The ships of Chittim come from the West, and Asshur and Eber are in turn laid desolate to perish for ever.

In the ecstasy of prophecy he had climbed a moral pinnacle whence he could spurn at once the bribes he had hankered after and the royal briber who had offered them; and, careless of consequences, he had spoken the word that God put in his mouth. It is the first prophetic outlook beyond Israel into the world at large; from that Pisgah height we have a predictive glance at once to Gentile East and Gentile West. We are held too by the splendour of the poetry, Homeric rather than Hebrew in its amplitude, iteration, ring; for true sublimity of thought, for breadth and precision, the prophecies which Balaam uttered are scarcely second to any.

¶ The Hebrew prophets did not foresee and foretell curious coincidences, but they foresaw and foretold the inevitable triumph of righteousness. First, they foretold it for all the men and nations of their own day, and especially for those colossal unrighteous kingdoms of the heathen world which looked everlasting; then, for all time. "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more";—sooner or later it is, it must be, so. Hebrew

prophecy is never read aright until it is read in this sense, which indeed of itself it cries out for; it is, as Davison finely says, impatient for the larger scope. How often, throughout the ages, how often, even, by the Hebrew prophets themselves, has some immediate visible interposition been looked for! "I looked," they make God say, "and there was no man to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me. The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." O long-delaying arm of might, will the Eternal never put thee forth, to smite these sinners who go on as if righteousness mattered nothing? There is no need; they are smitten. Down they come, one after another; Assyria falls, Babylon, Greece, Rome; they all fall for want of righteousness. . . . To Israel are the promises, and to Israel they are fulfilled. "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." It is so; since all history is an accumulation of experiences that what men and nations fall by is want of conduct. To call it by this plain name is often not amiss, for the thing is never more great than when it is looked at in its simplicity and reality. Yet the true name to touch the soul is the name Israel gave: righteousness.[1]

5. All this is admirable; and, were this all, the son of Beor would deserve to be named among the moral heroes of the world, but it is sad to remember that, whilst such lofty predictions are flowing from his lips, Balaam is leading Balak from place to place, building altars and sacrificing bullocks and rams, if by chance from some point of view he may be able to see Israel cursed of God. He will not say what he does not feel about Israel, but he is quite willing to be blinded to Israel's greatness. He feels bound to say what he knows, but he is willing to know as little as possible. He dare not disobey God, but he has no real sympathy with His purposes. And so he goes home without reward or honour, having incurred the displeasure of Balak.

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, 204.

II.

The Wages of Unrighteousness.

Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.—Num. xxxi. 8.

1. Driven with disgrace and dishonour from the presence of him at whose bidding he had undertaken this ill-omened journey, having offended God without pleasing men, like so many who forfeit heaven and yet fail to win earth, who, letting go the substance, snatch at the shadow, and miss shadow and substance alike, Balaam makes one last and desperate effort to obtain the favour and the rewards which he sees escaping from his hands; and he, the man to whom and by whom God had spoken, who saw the vision of the Almighty, whose eyes God had opened, is the author of the devilish suggestion that the children of Israel should be seduced to uncleanness, and so robbed of their righteousness. Their crime and punishment are related in Deuteronomy and Numbers. And from the narrative given in Numbers, it appears that Balaam was the contriver of the whole matter. It is also ascribed to him in the Book of Revelation, where he is said to have taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel.

2. This was a man who would not for lucre or for influence disobey his conscience, yet laboured to corrupt his conscience. He saw the good and the blessing of goodness, yet longed and strove to transfer that blessing to the evil, and "paltered with eternal God" for leave so to bestow it. He saw that the endless victory must rest with the children of God, and he yearned to attain to it through a death like theirs; yet he set himself to defraud God of His children, and His children of their God, by the fiercest temptation of their flesh. We are not to suppose that Balaam now threw off the mask and became openly a bad man. It would appear that he still kept up his self-deceit and dissimulation, as if what he was doing were but lawful and right, so that he not only led them into practices of sin, but corrupted and perverted their principles also, persuading them that they might thus hold with God and yet with sin and the flesh.

¶ The moral law of Jehovah and the comparative purity of the Israelites as His people kept them separate from the other nations, gave them dignity and vigour. To break down this defence would make them like the rest, would withdraw them from the favour of their God and even defeat His purposes. The scheme was one which only the vilest craft could have conceived; and it shows us too plainly the real character of Balaam. He must have known the power of the allurements which he now advised as the means of attack on those he could not touch with his maledictions or gain by his soothsaying. In the shadow of this scheme of his we see the diviner and all his tribe, and indeed the whole morality of the region, at their very worst.[1]

3. But retribution came, and swiftly. The due reward of Balaam's works was given him. The death of the righteous was not destined for this corrupting traitor, for this apostate seer. It is no wonder that a little later he is entangled in the doom of those with whom he has made common cause against God; and that, when the Midianites perish beneath the sword of Joshua, he should perish with them. There is something very significant in the brief parenthetic notice which records his doom: "Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword."

So on the blood-stained turf, so amid the routed ranks, so by the pitiless swords of the men whom he had seduced to their ruin, so after the wasted life and desecrated gifts, his blows frustrated, his curses foiled, his name degraded into a by-word, died one who, had he but been faithful to his own best convictions, might have been almost as great as Moses himself. For the hope of a handful of paltry dross he had sold his eternal jewel to the enemy of man, and he had earned the dreadful twofold epitaph which the New Testament inscribes with ceremonious reprobation upon his name. One epitaph is "Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." The other is, "Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication."

¶ It is to be noted that it is neither by us ascertainable what moments of pure feeling or aspiration may occur to men of minds apparently cold and lost, nor by us to be pronounced through what instruments, and in what strangely occurrent voices, God may choose to communicate good to men. It seems to me that

[1] R. A. Watson, *The Book of Numbers*, 313.

much of what is great, and to all men beneficial, has been wrought by those who neither intended nor knew the good they did; and that many mighty harmonies have been discoursed by instruments that had been dumb or discordant, but that God knew their stops. The Spirit of Prophecy consisted with the avarice of Balaam. Could we spare from its page that parable, which he said, who saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open; though we know that the sword of his punishment was then sharp in its sheath beneath him in the plains of Moab? . . . Selfish in their industry, unchastened in their wills, ungrateful for the Spirit that is upon them, men may yet be helmed by that Spirit whithersoever the Governor listeth; involuntary instruments they may become of others' good; unwillingly they may bless Israel, but short-coming there will be of their glory, and sure, of their punishment.[1]

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, ii. (*Works*, iv. 213).

JOSHUA.

I.

The Faithful Servant.

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The Faithful Servant.

Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister.—Josh. i. 1.

1. The Books of Genesis and Exodus contain the story of the deliverance of God's people; in Leviticus and Numbers we have the law of holiness expounded. In Deuteronomy and Joshua we have the account of how the house of Jacob obtained their possessions. The Book of Joshua, in character as well as in composition, is closely allied to the books which immediately precede it. By the Jews it was separated from the law and included among the "Former Prophets"; but neither by its contents nor by its literary structure does the book itself warrant this separation. We have been in the habit of speaking of the Pentateuch; it would be more correct to speak of the Hexateuch; for there is good ground for belief that the Book of Joshua forms part, along with the other five books, of one great historical work, which recounts the early history of Israel. As to the author of this book, absolutely nothing is known. Many conjectures have been made which are utterly valueless, and the attempt to ascribe the authorship of the book to Joshua himself finds no support in Scripture. In these matters it is well for us not to be wise above what is written.

¶ It is obvious from the conclusion that the Book of Joshua was written neither by Joshua, nor within his lifetime. But there are certain entirely independent considerations that suggest so much at least as this: the book was written long after the age of Joshua, and in Judah.

(1) The presentation of the Hebrew settlement in Canaan as the result of a rapid and complete conquest appears to be due to the idealizing of long past events; the Book of Joshua must on this account be judged much later than the age which gave birth to the account in the first chapter, and to the stories that form the substance, of the Book of Judges: for the account in Judges, in its broad features, accords, the representation that dominates

Joshua is entirely at conflict, with what the conditions and historical movements prevailing about 1400 B.C., and revealed to us by the contemporary Tell el-Amarna tablets, would lead us to expect the nature of the Hebrew settlement, which took place somewhat later, actually to have been.

(2) In Josh. xv. 63 we read: "But the Jebusite(s) the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Israel were unable to dispossess; and (so) the Jebusite has dwelt with the children of Judah in Jerusalem until this day." With the substitution of "Benjamin" for "Judah" these words recur in Judg. i. 21. Probably in both books the words are cited from a common and ancient source; in any case there is no probability that Judges borrows from Joshua; and so in Joshua at least the words are a quotation. But these words throw back the (partial) conquest to a past age, which is tacitly contrasted with "the present day." In any case the book which cites the passage must be later than the source it cites, and consequently the product of an age later certainly than Joshua, possibly also later than David.

(3) The reference to the Book of Jashar (x. 13) certainly implies a date later than David, for that book contained, among others, poems of David (2 Sam. i. 18).

(4) Interest in South Palestine and specifically in Judah dominates the book. Both in the account of the Conquest and in that of the division of the land the South is dealt with much more fully, and the district of Judah is more minutely described than that of any other tribe. The conquest of Central Palestine, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, is entirely omitted, and it is only at the end of the book that this district comes into prominence; and then almost of necessity, for Joshua naturally goes to his own country to make his farewell and die.[1]

2. There are in the Bible a few men who were so extraordinary in their moral stature that no higher tribute could be rendered to their unique personality and services than this, that they were "hard to follow." Such a man was Elijah the Tishbite, whose life was so full of heroic achievement and dramatic incident that Elisha, although clad in the mantle of his predecessor, found it no easy task to succeed him in the prophetic office. Such a man was Moses, the man of God, whose character was such a beautiful blend of strength and tenderness, and whose career was distinguished by such signal tokens of Heaven's favour, that the son of Nun trembled at the thought of taking his place as leader

[1] G. B. Gray, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*, 56.

of the host of Israel. Elisha and Joshua were good and great men, and their virtues and merits would have been more distinctly recognized by us but for the surpassing and overshadowing brilliance of the men whom they succeeded. No Hebrew prophet or ruler equalled Moses in nobility of character, greatness of mind, and extent of personal influence. Joshua was a small man in comparison with his predecessor. He was no prophet or constructive genius; he was not capable of the heights of communion and revelation which the lofty spirit of Moses was able to mount. He was only a plain, fiery soldier, with energy, swift decision, promptitude, self-command, and all the military virtues in the highest degree.

¶ Joshua could claim neither the breadth of Moses nor the religious genius of Samuel; he reminds us rather of David by his military qualities, his unshakable faith in the help of Jehovah, and his lack of reliance on the loyalty of the tribes which he was leading on to victory. He set to work courageously, trusting to God more than man, and his chequered career shows us in the midst of perils a constancy of courage and faith which was the cause of his success.[1]

3. There is something at once beautiful and significant in the relationship between Moses and Joshua. It is the contact of maturity and youth, of the master and the scholar, and it suggests to us that deep natural order which ensures that the young evermore step into the heritage of the aged, and carry on the progress of the world. Moses made a firm, solid-set man out of his follower. He succeeded because he worked patiently for many years; and he did his work quietly. He let Joshua's union with him grow out of circumstances. We can well fancy the reverence and love which an unimaginative, plain, unthoughtful, unmystical, but fiery nature like Joshua's would have for a subtle, many-sided, spiritual, imaginative, but fiery nature like that of Moses. For in fire, and ardour, and courage, they were equal and at one. By that reverence and love, growing deeper year by year, Joshua won the power of understanding the ideas of Moses, and of rooting them into his character.

¶ The central thought of all the philosophy of Moses was that religion was the base of all thinking, that it was the spring of all

[1] A. Westphal, *The Law and the Prophets*, 215.

right conduct, that it was the greatest thing in the world—the only great and worthy thing—and in these thoughts Joshua shared. He was a young man, with all a young man's heat of blood and thoughtlessness of impulse, but he learned this great lesson, and by learning it he fitted himself for a great life.[1]

¶ The great leader attracts to himself men of kindred character, drawing them towards him as the loadstone draws iron. Thus, Sir John Moore early distinguished the three brothers Napier from the crowd of officers by whom he was surrounded, and they, on their part, repaid him by their passionate admiration. They were captivated by his courtesy, his bravery, and his lofty disinterestedness; and he became the model whom they resolved to imitate, and, if possible, to emulate. "Moore's influence," says the biographer of Sir William Napier, "had a signal effect in forming and maturing their characters; and it is no small glory to have been the hero of those three men, while his early discovery of their mental and moral qualities is a proof of Moore's own penetration and judgment of character."[2]

¶ To be a true disciple is to think of the same things as our prophet, and to think of different things in the same order. To be of the same mind with another is to see all things in the same perspective; it is not to agree in a few indifferent matters near at hand and not much debated; it is to follow him in his farthest flights, to see the force of his hyperboles, to stand so exactly in the centre of his vision that whatever he may express, your eyes will light at once on the original, that whatever he may see to declare, your mind will at once accept.[3]

I.

Amalek.

1. The first mention that we have of Joshua's name is when it is said, "Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek." We do not know much of his earlier life, we only know that he was born in Goshen, in the land of Egypt; was the son of Nun of the tribe of Ephraim; was of the twelfth generation from Joseph, and was about forty years of age when the Exodus took place. He is styled "the minister of Moses,"

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Endless Choice*, 88.
[2] S. Smiles, *Character*, 17.
[3] R. L. Stevenson, *Lay Morals*.

and "the servant of Moses," and occupied about the same relation to him as a chief of staff does to his general. When the Israelites had been in the desert only about seven days, Joshua had an opportunity of distinguishing himself. Encamped at Rephidim, the children of Israel were attacked by a tribe of the Amalekites, and Moses gave Joshua the task of repelling the attack. On whatever grounds Joshua was appointed, the result amply vindicated the selection. On Joshua's part there is none of that hesitation in accepting his work which was shown even by Moses himself when he got his commission at the burning bush. He seems to have accepted the appointment with humble faith and spirited enthusiasm, and to have prepared at once for the perilous enterprise.

¶ Her idea of attacking the central stronghold of the world's fashion and pleasure [Paris] was a daring one for a woman, especially for a woman of the Maréchale's youthful years. About this time she read the *Life of Napoleon*, and found in his astonishing career many lessons for an evangelist. She was especially struck by his faith in his star, and his contempt for *ce bête de mot, impossible*. She knew that she had something better to trust to than a star, and stronger reason for holding that all things are possible.[1]

2. Joshua was one of those men who, lacking initiative themselves, build splendidly to another's plan. He was attracted, inspired, moulded, ruled by the creative genius of Moses. Here we have him in the valley fighting Amalek, receiving and dealing hard blows; now advancing victoriously, now doubtfully retreating, finally winning a great victory. Any military report of the battle would credit him with the whole achievement. But the historian of God's ways introduces the silent, uplifted hand of Moses on the hill, holding, from and for heaven, the key of victory. Those in the valley are but the instruments of that intercessory hand on the hill-top. If that falls through weariness, the battle-flags will flutter and be lowered with it: while that remains pointing heavenward, the banners will triumphantly ride the wind of war. Hour after hour the battle raged, till the arm of Moses became too weary to hold up the rod. A stone had to be found for him to sit on, and his comrades, Aaron and Hur, had

[1] J. Strahan, *The Maréchale* (1913), 120.

to hold up his hands. But even then, though the advantage was on the side of Joshua, it was sunset before Amalek was thoroughly defeated. Joshua returned in triumph, and then began his training. It was an hour of great danger for his future work; for no one can help seeing that his temptation would be to feel that which every Israelite was first taught not to feel—that it was his own arm that had won the fight, and his own genius that had secured it.

¶ Prayer can obtain everything; it can open the windows of heaven, and shut the gates of hell; it can put a holy constraint upon God, and detain an angel till he leave a blessing; it can open the treasures of rain, and soften the iron ribs of rocks, till they melt into tears and a flowing river: prayer can unclasp the girdles of the north, saying to a mountain of ice, Be thou removed thence, and cast into the bottom of the sea; it can arrest the sun in the midst of his course and send the swift-winged winds upon our errand; and all those strange things, and secret decrees, and unrevealed transactions which are above the clouds and far beyond the regions of the stars, shall combine in ministry and advantages for the praying man.[1]

¶ We had a meeting at the Council Office on Friday to order a prayer "on account of the troubled state of certain parts of the United Kingdom"—great nonsense.[2]

Darkly the battle fluctuates to and fro,
While, on the mount, uplifted hands of prayer
Diffuse a halo of calm radiance there,
The "noise of war" resounding far below;
As when on some high peak, with lingering glow,
The sunset sits enthroned serene and fair,
While rolling mists obscure the lower air,
And darkling streams with voice of thunder flow.
Lord, I would climb each day prayer's shining height,
And draw with lifted hands Thy blessing down,
My sword to prosper in the strenuous fight,
My arm to strengthen for the victor's crown;
In life's stern warfare sword and arm may fail,
But backed by faith and prayer they must prevail.[3]

[1] Jeremy Taylor.
[2] *The Greville Memoirs*, ii. 101.
[3] Richard Wilton.

II.

Mount Sinai.

1. It is not without reason that history makes Moses take Joshua up afterwards with him into the sacred mountain, into the awful presence of God's power. While he went himself into the central darkness, he left Joshua upon the outskirts, alone in those dreadful solitudes. That was enough to take out of a man the sense of his own greatness. Joshua learned his lesson for life. There is not one touch, from beginning to end of his course, of any self-exaltation to the exclusion of God. No man could more undividedly carry out the idea that all Israel's success and victories were due to God alone.

Joshua waited patiently for the return of his master in a hollow of the mountain's brow. He was allowed to go with him as far or as high as, nay even higher than, any other earthly companion. There are grades in the soul's ascent and privilege. It was enough for Joshua that day to have earned a place so near the cloud, the nearest neighbour of the man who was called within to be God's listener.

2. The next step in Joshua's training was to learn how to obey with love and reverence. Therefore, after he had been solemnized upon the mountain, he became the "servant," the daily attendant of Moses. He lived with him in the tabernacle, doing his work, running to and fro in attendance, learning the duties which should belong to him as leader by being the right hand of the leader; the greatest warrior of the camp in daily obedience to the lawgiver of the camp. He began life well and nobly; for it is said of him, "Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle." As Moses passes with shining face, a majestic presence, through the worshipping people, Joshua, a young man, remains behind in the tabernacle, praying for that vision of God which shall fit him to take up the work of his vanishing master.

> Like One who after many ages came,
> Jehoshua—God-Saviour—was His name.

As to "His Father's house" His way He made,
His type "within the Tabernacle" stayed.

Each by hard toil and lowly ministry
Learned through obedience that which he should be.

And, when the time appointed was at hand,
Each led his people to a Promised Land.

III.

The Seventy Elders.

1. The next time that Joshua comes into notice is not so flattering to him. It is on that occasion when the Spirit descended on the seventy elders who had been appointed to assist Moses, and they prophesied round about the tabernacle. Two of the seventy were not with the rest, but nevertheless they received the Spirit and were prophesying in the camp. The military instinct of Joshua was hurt at the irregularity, and his concern for the honour of Moses was roused by their apparent indifference to their head. He hurried to inform Moses, not doubting that he would interfere to correct the irregularity. But the narrow spirit of youth met with a memorable rebuke from the larger and more noble spirit of the leader—"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!"

2. The spirit which was exhibited by Joshua in this incident was that of the martinet, and, if it had not been checked, would have been the jealous and envious spirit in the commander of an army; and in Canaan both would have been fatal to his influence and success among the hot-tempered princes of Israel and the fierce people. But, whatever be the reason, Joshua had got rid of all this weak, jealous, and martinet temper when we find him in Canaan. No complaints, no cabals, such as those which were made against Moses, were made against him. What Moses said to him when he carried his jealous tale about the unauthorized prophets—"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!"—Joshua would

have said to any one who reported to him an unauthorized deed of war by one of his companions as dangerous to his supremacy—"Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were chieftains in war!"

¶ Cardinal Manning, who regretted the alienation of Cardinal Vaughan (then Bishop of Salford) from other than Catholic workers, urged him to visit some of the Salvation Army Shelters. Vaughan did so, accompanied by Mr. Wilfrid Meynell, who gives the following account of the visit: "In one room sat a number of women, mostly old women, at various sorts of needlework. 'Are any of my people here?' asked the Bishop, addressing the assembly. And, dotted about the room, aged dames, in the dignity of Poverty, stood up for their faith. Then the Bishop turned on the Captain: 'And do these attend Protestant prayers?' 'They attend the praises of God every evening.' 'And what do you preach?' 'We preach Christ and Him Crucified, and we shall be very pleased if you will stay and so preach Him this evening. We are quite unsectarian.' This was too much. 'Well, but if I told them that unless they were baptized they could not be saved?' 'I should tell them that it was not true,' said the Captain. 'And I should tell them that it was not true,' echoed Cardinal Manning when we told him the story an hour later; 'I should explain to them the Church's doctrine of the Baptism of Desire.' Manning's Thomas More-like love of rallying whatever seemed too grave and too formal—a fashion of mind and speech which increased with the passage of years—was much in evidence that evening. Herbert Vaughan's great gravity offered a tempting target for the darts and sallies of this Most Eminent Puck, who greeted his return with the hope that Herbert, who had always been so good a Catholic, would now, after his contact with the Army, be also a good Christian! But the Bishop insisted on a ban, not banter. He went straight to the point. 'You are quite mistaken, my Lord, in thinking that the work of the Army is undenominational,' and he told the test case about Baptism, with the result already named. The more sanguine the Cardinal about the good done by the 'other sheep,' the more sore became the Bishop. 'I know,' he said, 'you would labour and love out of mere humanitarian motives. They would be enough for you, but not for me. I could do it only as a duty, the duty of a Christian Bishop. The natural man in me has no love for the world.' 'God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son—but that is a detail.'"[1]

[1] J. G. Snead-Cox, *The Life of Cardinal Vaughan*, i. 481.

IV.

The Report of the Spies.

1. Joshua was one of the twelve spies who were sent into the land of Canaan to spy out the land and report as to the advisability of the children of Israel going over at once to take possession of it. Upon their return, ten of the spies gave an adverse report. Joshua was one of the two who alone had the courage to bring a true report of the Promised Land. The cowardly and false report of the other ten had filled the children of Israel with fear; they were on the point of revolt. "Let us make a captain, they said one to another, and let us return into Egypt." Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the assembly of the congregation. But Joshua with Caleb stood forth and testified to the children of Israel: "The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us." Here is the real lesson of Joshua's character; it is the example not merely of a soldier's courage, but of intrepidity built on faith; he was not afraid of those who were avowedly God's enemies; he overthrew the Amalekites and Canaanites. He was not afraid of the defection and threats of God's people, not intimidated to withhold his message because other messengers of God feared to tell the truth. For forty years his message had no proof. None of the unbelieving and faint-hearted children of Israel were allowed to enjoy the blessings they had refused to believe in. But when their punishment was accomplished, Joshua and Caleb, his brother in faith and courage, came again to the Promised Land, and God gave them the assurance of His support and presence.

¶ To be in a voluntary minority in great moral and spiritual issues takes heroism of no common sort. Such heroism is only born of a simple trust in God. Caleb and Joshua saw the giants just as the others did, and knew themselves too to be but as grasshoppers—but they saw God also! The ten saw God, if at all, only through the difficulties of the situation. These two men saw the difficulties through God. In the one case the difficulties minimized God. In the other God minimized the difficulties.

All of which is an illustration of the way in which men of faith and men without faith look out upon life and determine their conduct! The men who do not allow their vision of God to be clouded by anything external and material are constantly saying with these two, "Let us go up at once and possess the land, for we are well able to overcome it." These are faith's heroes. For without doubt Caleb and Joshua stood alone, scorned and derided by a faithless people, always ready to follow the faithless leaders who recommended to them the ever popular "line of least resistance," and whose influence on the subsequent course of the nation's life is too well known to need pointing out. History always sets an unerring verdict upon such moral mistakes as were made at Kadesh-barnea, whether by men or nations. And the plainest man among us can always read it. Moral heroism which yields uncontested sovereignty to the claims of God has in itself the assurance of ultimate victory and prosperity. In that hour of such magnificent resolve, faith received a promise of reward to which Caleb and Joshua clung throughout all the weary years which elapsed before they were again on the borders of the Promised Land. Its accomplishment often seemed far off and remote. Yet during those years the testimony of one at least of them is that he "wholly followed the Lord." The original purpose of his life was undaunted and undiverted. All the way through the wilderness-wanderings he was true to the light and cherished the promise. The undivided allegiance of his heart was never withdrawn from God. Faith and patience were in invincible alliance.[1]

2. This was the central point of Joshua's life in the wilderness on this side of Canaan. For with the sending of him into Palestine was linked his future work as conqueror of the land. Moses drew him apart from the rest and changed his name from Oshea, "the Saviour," to Jehoshua, "God the Saviour." The new name enshrined his destiny; it dedicated him to his work as captain of the Lord's host, as the winner of the land. It was a kind of baptism, a solemn consecration. Henceforth he knew what he was to do. A mighty, ruling idea was added to his life, and, as events fell out, it guided, inspired, and developed him for many years before he could put it into action.

¶ What I admire in Columbus is not his having discovered a world, but his having gone to search for it on the faith of an opinion.[2]

[1] J. S. Holden, *Life's Flood-Tide*, 135. [2] Turgot.

¶ There is one feature that is always prominent in those who are strong personalities, and that is a unity of purpose, a concentration of mind, a fixed determination which pursues its object steadily and without wavering. Whether it be a statesman, a general, a merchant, or a minister of God, they are all alike in this, that their motto is that of St. Paul, "One thing I do." And this unity of purpose is what religious people call consecration. It is the separation of one duty, one ambition, one resolve from all others, and giving it the prominent place in the life. It is the application to human life of that which is often done with buildings, vessels, and the like. The churches that are used for one object, the sacred vessels that are set apart for the Holy Communion, the Bible that is put into a place of its own, the military banner that is hung in some cathedral, all speak clearly of the meaning of consecration. And we feel that things so consecrated get a kind of virtue by reason of their consecration. They are different from other things of the kind, and have a certain halo of romance thrown about them. So, too, when consecration is applied to human life: the men and women who are known to be separate have a distinction of their own. It may be some dark purpose, a feeling of revenge which seeks to be satisfied; or some ambitious aim, a family estate to be won back, a name to be won; or it may be some philanthropic resolve, such as that which has animated a Wilberforce, a Shaftesbury, a Howard; or some religious undertaking, such as that which has inspired a Livingstone, a Carey, a Patteson; but, whatever it is you feel, it has a power of its own, and strongly determines personality. And the word "saint," so widely misunderstood, testifies to the distinction consecration gives to it, meaning one who is consecrated to the will of God. He may be very imperfect, very human; but, so far as he recognizes as a principle of his life that he would rather do the will of God than any one else's, he is a saint, a consecrated man.[1]

V.

Leader of Israel.

1. The time had now come for the children of Israel to take possession of their inheritance. Palestine was in sight, and Moses, knowing that his end was near, asked God with great

[1] G. H. S. Walpole, *Personality and Power*, 72.

solemnity to name his successor, "that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."

2. To Moses it would have been a source of legitimate gratification if one of his two sons, Gershom or Eliezer, had been appointed to be his successor. His brother Aaron had the joy before he died of seeing his son Eleazar assume the high-priestly robes, and the sacerdotal office remained in the family until the time of Eli. But with Moses it was otherwise. However pleasing such an arrangement would have been to his fatherly pride, in this as in other matters he was supremely disinterested, and his wish was in perfect harmony with the Divine choice. Joshua, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, was marked out by God for the position, and solemnly invested with authority by Moses, who gave the ordination charge before his decease.

3. The scene has a deep significance. It is not merely the dramatic contact of old and young that interests us—the pathos of a great man nearing his end, and the fascination of a young man at the beginning of a great career—but we see that the bond between them is a common religious ideal. Moses is fresh from the vision of God; Joshua is seeking it. There is a deep pathos of clinging hands as the parting hour of the two draws nearer. How often was the charge repeated by the older leader to the younger, "Be strong, and of a good courage," till it became a kind of national refrain.

4. As we pass from Moses to Joshua we feel as if we were passing from poetry to prose. Practical though Moses was, his sphere was on the height. The mountain was his native element. It was on the mountain that he had to prepare for the plain. It was the soul of a poet that led him to glorify common things; his sober practice came from his ecstatic elevation. Joshua, on the other hand, had never stood on the height, had never required to occupy it. He had not possessed the genius to discover the Promised Land. Moses was moving towards the Land of Promise. Everything had been planned; everything had been arranged. All that was needed was a patient drudge to execute the orders—a man who would be content to take the servant's place. No prophetic vision was required, no foresight. The head and the

heart of the enterprise were already there; all that remained was to seek a *hand*. Joshua could no more have wielded Moses' rod than Moses could have wielded Joshua's sword. The one did his work and was laid aside. But new circumstances required a new type of character—the smaller man was better fitted for the rougher work. Joshua was a man fit not only for battle but for tedious campaigning; full of resources, and able to keep up the heart of a whole people by his hopeful bearing. That he should have been able to fill the place vacated by so great a man as Moses gives us the highest idea of his calibre. That Moses was missed there can be little doubt; yet not Moses himself could have led the people more skilfully and successfully from victory to victory, or have in the full tide of conquest held them more thoroughly in hand, and settled them more quietly in the land.

¶ Traditions has not preserved any details which enable us to realize the individual character of Joshua. The present writer has said of Moses, "Moses' personality cannot be exactly defined. In the oldest tradition he stands in such isolated grandeur, is so constantly thought of as the ideal ruler and prophet, that the traits of human, individual life and character are lost. Even points that seem characteristic are soon seen to belong to the Israelite ideal of the saint and prophet . . . his wife and sons vanish silently from the story, which cares nothing about his personal relations, and is interested only in the official successor to his leadership." (Article "Moses," in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.) In the same way Joshua is not so much an individual as a type, first of a devoted adherent to a divinely appointed leader, and then of a God-fearing ruler and general. As tradition is sifted and interpreted with a view to edification, the individual traits are dropped, and hortatory writers, like the editors of the Book of Joshua, only retain those ideal features which they desire their readers to admire and imitate. Our sympathetic interest in a historical character is derived from the blending of light and shade, of strength and weakness, of failure and success, and even of noble and of unworthy motives, which is found in real men and women. But when once a hero is set up as a shining example, there is a growing tendency to represent him as a combination of a favourite of fortune, an admirable Crichton, and a perfect saint. It is doubtful whether he becomes more edifying, but he certainly grows less interesting. These and other considerations have led some scholars to suppose that Joshua is merely the personification of his tribe, Joseph; or the eponymous

ancestor devised for one of its clans. But if we had the ancient traditions in all their primitive fulness and frankness, we should probably find Joshua still there, as real and as human as Gideon, Saul, or David. As it is, the successor of Moses stands out as a noble ideal of a national leader in war and peace.[1]

5. Joshua had need of great strength and courage, for it was one of the most difficult of tasks that was entrusted to him. He was to lead the people through a series of the most brilliant and exciting military successes, and then to turn them to the most peaceful pursuits. He was to teach them to shed blood pitilessly, to harden them to such sights as the sacking of towns, and then to enforce laws which in many points were singularly humane. It has been said of the Romans that they conquered like savages and ruled like philosophic statesmen. The same transition had to be accomplished by Israel, and into the strong hand of Joshua was this delicate task committed.

¶ A keen observer, who is also one of the most vivid of contemporary writers, recently said in conversation that the greatest fighters he had known were by temperament and disposition the most peaceful of men. He named more than one famous English soldier, whose name is a synonym for daring audacity, who exhausts all the arts of diplomacy before resorting to arms, who hates war, and yet who fights with Titanic energy and apparent recklessness when the battle is on. These are men of true courage, because they face the issues of life and death, not with the stolidity of ignorance or the blind pluck of brute force, but with clear intelligence of all that war involves. The bravery of the Greek is more admirable than that of the Turk, because the Greek is intensely alert and sensitive, while the Turk is stolid and indifferent. It is said that no troops are so quiet under fire as the Turkish troops. Nothing disturbs or excites them. Under the play of murderous guns they move as calmly as if they were deploying on a parade-ground. In some cases this courage is the fruit of a fanatical religious faith; in most cases it is due to lack of physical and mental sensitiveness. The root of the noblest courage is faith in God.[2]

> Made of unpurchasable stuff,
> They went the way when ways were rough,
> They, when the traitors had deceived,
> Held the long purpose, and believed;

[1] W. H. Bennett, *Joshua and the Conquest of Palestine*, 86.
[2] H. W. Mabie, *The Life of the Spirit*, 122.

They, when the face of God grew dim,
Held thro' the dark and trusted Him—
Brave souls that fought the mortal way
And felt that faith could not betray.

Give thanks for heroes that have stirred
Earth with the wonder of a word,
But all thanksgiving for the breed
Who have bent destiny with deed—
Souls of the high, heroic birth,
Souls sent to poise the shaken earth,
And then called back to God again
To make heaven possible for men.

JOSHUA.

II.

The Victorious Soldier.

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The Victorious Soldier.

Be strong and of a good courage . . . and I will be with thee.—Deut. xxxi. 23.

Joshua is represented in Scripture as a warrior, one might almost say as nothing else; other soldiers have strongly marked characters of their own, as David, as the Centurion in the Gospels, and Cornelius in the Acts. But in Joshua the character of the man is lost in the soldier. It is remarkable how repeatedly it is said to him, "Be strong and of a good courage"; "Only be thou strong and very courageous; be not afraid." He was called upon for this courage; it was fulfilled in all his life; and at his death he gave the like injunction, saying to Israel, "Be ye therefore very courageous." But this in Joshua was a sacred courage, not that of the world, but of God; it was founded on faith. He was called upon to execute the purposes of God, and the call was ever accompanied by the promise, "I will be with thee"; and in that promise he trusted. All through the arduous campaign that followed, nothing could daunt Joshua's courage whilst that assurance was ever ringing its silver tones in the belfry of his memory. "I will be with thee."

¶ There is the power of being mastered by and possessed with an idea. How rare it is! I do not say how few men are so mastered and possessed: I say how few men have the *power* so to be. The fine and simple capacity for it which belongs to youth being once lost, how few men ever attain the culture by which it is renewed. But without it there can be no courage. Without some end set clear before you, what chance is there that you can shoot your arrow strong and straight? It does not need that you should be blind to all the difficulties that lie between. Recklessness is no part of courage. When Cromwell and his men gave the sublime picture of heroic courage which illuminates English history, it was not that they undervalued the enormous strength of what they fought against; it was that they saw righteousness

and freedom shining out beyond, and moved toward their fascinating presence irresistibly. Courage, like every other good thing, must be positive, not negative.[1]

I.

Jordan.

Moses is dead but the work goes on: divinely-gifted leaders are never wanting. "After the death of Moses . . . the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan. . . . Be strong and of a good courage . . . for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Time and again, in his instruction of Joshua, the Lord seemed to impress upon him the great necessity of being of a good courage. He knew that Joshua would have opportunities of exercising his faith, and that trials would be heaped upon him to such an extent that it would require the utmost courage to go through victoriously. However, with all the instruction given to Joshua, and the admonitions to be true to the Lord and courageous, there was always this precious promise: "The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

1. The first command given to Joshua was a trial of his faith. The whole land of Canaan was Israel's by deed of gift. But though this was so, each square mile of it had to be claimed from the hand of the peoples that possessed it. When Israel reached its banks, the Jordan was in flood, and overflowing the low-lying lands on either side of its bed. Across the river stood Jericho, embosomed in palms and tamarisks, in a very paradise of exquisite vegetation, its aromatic shrubs and gardens scenting the air. But as the people beheld it, all their cherished hopes of taking it by their own energy or courage must have been utterly dissipated. To cross a stream in the face of the enemy is a difficult operation, even for modern armies; what must it have been for Joshua and his horde? Not a hint is given him as to the means by which the crossing is to be made possible. He has Jehovah's command to do it, and Jehovah's promise to be with him, and that is to be enough.

[1] Bishop Phillips Brooks, *Essays and Addresses*, 333.

¶ The narrative of the crossing of the Jordan has recently received a remarkable illustration from a passage discovered in an MS. Arabic history. This states that in A.D. 1266 a great landslip at Damieh dammed the Jordan at a time when it was in full flood; and below Damieh the river ceased to flow from midnight till about 10 a.m. This Damieh is often identified with the Adam of the Book of Joshua, and is a point about seventeen miles north of Jericho, where the valley of the river contracts to a narrow gorge, which might easily be blocked by a landslip. Thus the Jordan could be crossed by the Israelites at many separate points. We must not, therefore, think of them as marching in one long, continuous procession. A traveller who lived for many years among the Bedouin, describing the great pilgrim caravan from Damascus to Medina and Mecca, writes:

"There go commonly three or four camels abreast and seldom five: the length of the slow-footed multitude of men and cattle is near two miles, and the width some hundred yards in the open plains. The Hajjaj [pilgrims] were this year by their account (which may be above the truth) 6000 persons; of these more than half are serving-men on foot; and 10,000 of all kinds of cattle, the most camels, then mules, hackneys, asses, and a few dromedaries of Arabians returning in security of the great convoy to their own district." (C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, i. 7.)

The Israelites were not ordinary travellers but tribes migrating with their families and all their belongings, so that the proportion of cattle and beasts of burden would be larger than in the Mecca caravan. At the lowest estimate this gathering of nomad clans would include a formidable multitude of men and animals, and we may imagine them on the morning of the crossing encamped for miles along the river, each kindred by itself. At dawn the tents were struck, and the scanty belongings of the nomads were packed; and later, perhaps at some concerted signal, the loads were lifted on to the backs of the beasts of burden, and the clans crossed the river to take up new camping grounds in the plains on the west of the Jordan. Again we may compare the account given of the starting of the Damascus caravan for Mecca:

"The day risen, the tents were dismantled, the camels led in ready to their companies, and halted beside their loads. We waited to hear the cannon shot which would open that year's pilgrimage. It was near ten o'clock when we heard the signal gun fired, and then, without any disorder, litters were suddenly heaved and braced upon the bearing beasts, their charges laid upon the

kneeling camels, and the thousands of riders, all born in the caravan countries, mounted in silence."[1]

2. Following the narrative, we are informed that three days were allowed, if not for physical, certainly for moral and spiritual preparation for the crossing of the river. Joshua moved his camp to the very brink of the river. Then after appropriate religious ceremonies, he placed the priests with the ark of God in front. The waters as they approached moved to left and right, and this vast multitude, with all their cattle and bearing their belongings, walked over on the dry bed of the river, several hours being consumed in the passage. When the last one of this mighty and consecrated host had set his feet upon the sacred soil, the waters rolled back, and shut them out for ever from their wanderings and bondage; shut them in to a land which was full of trials yet to come, but whose mountains were crested with beauty and whose valleys laughed with abundance.

From Josh. iii. 7 and 10 we learn that the purpose of this miracle was twofold. It was intended to stamp the seal of God's approbation on Joshua, and to hearten the people by the assurance of God's fighting for them. The leader was thereby put on the level of Moses, the people on that of the generation before whom the Red Sea had been divided.

¶ If I had to single out any one chapter in the Bible which I am conscious of having influenced me most, I should say the first of Joshua, with its oft-repeated exhortation to be strong and to be very courageous; and if I had to single out any particular verses it would be those which were taught me when a boy and which I long afterwards saw on the wall in General Gordon's room in Southampton: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."[2]

3. Intelligence of this marvellous event reached the ears not only of the Amorite mountain-chiefs, but also of the Canaanite lowlanders on the sea-coast, and filled them with the utmost alarm; "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more." No attack, therefore, was made upon the Israelites, who

[1] W. H. Bennett, *Joshua and the Conquest of Palestine*, 38.
[2] W. T. Stead, in *Books which have Influenced me.*

were left in quiet possession of their advanced post on the western side of Jordan. Here the rite of circumcision, so long neglected during their desert wanderings, was performed, and in memory of this removal of the reproach of their uncircumcised state, the rising ground of their encampment was called Gilgal. They were now also in a condition to keep the passover, which was duly celebrated on the fourteenth day of the month at even on the plains of Jericho, and the unleavened cakes prescribed for this festival were made of the old corn of the land, and not of the manna, which on the next day entirely ceased, and thus proved that their desert life was really over.

¶ While the manna continued to descend, it was the staple article of food; but when the manna was withdrawn, the old corn and other fruits of the country took its place. In other words, the miracle was not continued when it ceased to be necessary. The manna had been a provision for the wilderness, where ordinary food in sufficient quantity could not be obtained; but now that they were in a land of fields and orchards and vineyards the manna was withdrawn. No sanction is given in the Bible to the idea of a lavish and needless expenditure of supernatural power. A law of economy, we might almost say parsimony, prevails side by side with the exercise of unbounded liberality. Jesus multiplies the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude, but He will not let one fragment be lost that remains after the feast. A similar law guides the economy of prayer. We have no right to ask that mercies may come to us through extraordinary channels, when it is in our power to get them by ordinary means. If it is in our power to procure bread by our labour, we dare not ask it to be sent direct. We are only too prone to make prayer at the eleventh hour an excuse for want of diligence or want of courage in what bears on the prosperity of the spiritual life. It may be that of His great generosity, God sometimes blesses us, even though we have made a very inadequate use of the ordinary means. But on that we have no right to presume. We are fond of short and easy methods where the natural method would be long and laborious. But here certainly we find the working of natural law in the spiritual world. We cannot look for God's blessing without diligent use of God's appointed means.[1]

4. Gilgal, the first encampment, seems to have been the resting-place of the ark and probably of the non-combatants, during the

[1] W. G. Blaikie, *The Book of Joshua*, 123.

conquest, and to have derived thence a sacredness which long clung to it, and finally led, singularly enough, to its becoming a centre of idolatrous worship. The rude circle of unhewn stones without inscription was, no doubt, exactly like the many prehistoric monuments found all over the world, which forgotten races have raised to keep in everlasting remembrance forgotten fights and heroes. These grey stones preached at once the duty of remembering, and the danger of forgetting, the past mercies of God.

¶ A few months before the death of Robert Louis Stevenson, certain Samoan chiefs whom he had befriended while they were under imprisonment for political causes, and whose release he had been instrumental in effecting, testified their gratitude by building an important piece of road leading to Mr. Stevenson's Samoan country house, Vailima. At a corner of the road there was erected a notice, prepared by the chiefs and bearing their names, which reads:

"The Road of the Loving Heart.

'Remembering the great love of his highness, Tusitala, and his loving care when we were in prison and sore distressed, we have prepared him an enduring present, this road which we have dug to last for ever.'"[1]

II.

Jericho.

Israel passed over Jordan, but there were more dangers in front; they escaped from one difficulty only to meet another. There stood Jericho, a strong city, walled up to heaven. But the command was still—Go forward, Jericho must be taken. It was the key of the country, and before they could open the country to take possession of the heritage their God had given them they had to take that key. They had to take it, or fail utterly; to take it or perish at the very threshold of their enterprise.

¶ Of the many fortresses in Palestine, Jericho appears to have been the most nearly impregnable. The Israelites had no siege

[1] *M'Clure's Magazine*, July, 1895.

engines; neither battering-ram, nor catapult, nor moving tower. Their only weapons were slings, arrows, spears. Against the walls of Jericho these were as straws and thistle-down. There were two other passes by which Joshua might have entered the Promised Land. Neither of them was guarded. It is significant that God conducted him across the Jordan at the point where the strongest fortification in the country stood directly in his way; the point where the sole alternatives before him were victory that seemed impossible or defeat that would be ruin. Once before, the Israelites had entered Palestine. Then they approached from the south, crossed the border unopposed, and fled back before they were attacked. But in conquering Jericho they virtually subdued the Promised Land. No good or permanently pleasant possession is ever gained in this world except by overcoming obstacles. Jericho always bars the entrance to the Promised Land. We see some object of desire. We see the difficulties in the way. We wish they were removed. We attack them, if we dare, for the sake of what we see behind them. But in conquering our Jericho we always find something more precious than we see or seek. Is it wealth one longs for? It must be earned by toil, frugality, self-denial. Indolence must be overcome. Unless these difficulties have been mastered, wealth is no blessing. There are no beatitudes save such as are approached by steep and narrow ways.[1]

1. Joshua was a brave military leader; but he needed Divine guidance in beginning the great campaign, and also Divine heartening and encouragement. It must have been a time of great suspense for him. In anxious mood he went forward alone to reconnoitre the place. While he was there, thinking and thinking, all at once there glimmered in the twilight over against him the figure of "a man with his sword drawn in his hand." What was it? Dream of the night, or spirit of the dead, solid form or unsubstantial vapour, man or angel, friend or foe,—Joshua knew not, but he was ready for the encounter. Simple as a child, fearless as "one of the immortals," he looked the Mystery in the face, and challenged the unknown warrior with the question, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Joshua knew of no neutrality in the warfare of God. The stranger must be friend or enemy. But there is something amiss with the question, for it is rebuked. "Nay," says the vision, not for you,

[1] W. B. Wright, *The World to Come*, 75.

nor yet for your adversaries, am I come, but "as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come."

¶ Surely we are not told in Scripture about the Angels for nothing, but for practical purposes; nor can I conceive a use of our knowledge more practical than to make it connect the sight of this world with the thought of another. Nor one more consolatory; for surely it is a great comfort to reflect that, wherever we go, we have those about us who are ministering to all the heirs of salvation, though we see them not. Nor one more easily to be understood and felt by all men; for we know at one time the doctrine of Angels was received even too readily. And if any one would argue hence against it as dangerous, let him recollect the great principle of our Church, that the abuse of a thing does not supersede the use of it.[1]

2. It seemed to Joshua that there were two sides, his own and the enemy's, between which the battle was to be fought out; he had to learn that it was not for him or for Israel to gain the victory, but for the Lord their God. Up to that time Joshua thought he was captain, but he was mistaken, and he saw it. In deep reverence he fell on his face, and was bidden, like Moses at the burning bush, to loose his shoes from off his feet, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Then the captain of the Lord's host gave His orders, told of His plan—not at all like the plans of Joshua—how Jericho was to be taken, not by might or strength of armed men, but by the blast of the Spirit of God toppling down the stupendous walls in which the heathen Canaanites put their trust. The Israelites were not to take Jericho by their own strength, or to lift sword or spear against it. Jericho was to be taken in God's way. The priests were to carry the ark round Jericho for seven days, bearing with them trumpets of rams' horns. On the seventh day, when they blew a blast, the walls would fall down.

Israel wondered but obeyed. Doubtless the men of Jericho laughed behind their strong walls, and thought that a few priests bearing trumpets could not hurt them. For six days the ark was carried round Jericho, but the walls stood as strong as ever. On the seventh day, whilst the people laughed, the priests went seven times round Jericho, and the trumpets sounded, and the people

[1] J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, ii. 365.

shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell down flat. By no human power had these walls fallen before the Israelites. The voice of God was the cannon that made the breach. One moment they had stood impregnable. The next they had fallen in ruins. The Israelites had only to reap the victory. It was God who had won it.

¶ Jericho is a city surrounded by resources. Yet in war she has always been easily taken. That her walls fell down at the sound of Joshua's trumpets is no exaggeration, but the soberest summary of all her history. Judæa could never keep her. She fell to Northern Israel till Northern Israel perished. She fell to Bacchides and the Syrians. She fell to Aristobulus when he advanced on his brother Hyrcanus and Judæa. She fell without a blow to Pompey, and at the approach of Herod and again of Vespasian her people deserted her. It is also interesting to note that three invaders of Judæa—Bacchides, Pompey, and Vespasian —took Jericho before they attempted Jerusalem, although she did not lie upon their way to the latter, and that they fortified her, not, it is to be supposed, as a base of operations so much as a source of supplies. This weakness of Jericho was due to two causes. An open pass came down on her from Northern Israel, and from this both part of her water supply could be cut off and the hills behind her could be occupied. But besides this, her people never seem to have been distinguished for bravery; and, indeed, in that climate, how could they? Enervated by the great heat, which degrades all the inhabitants of the Ghôr, and unable to endure on their bodies aught but linen, it was impossible they could be warriors, or anything but irrigators, paddlers in water and soft earth. We forget how near neighbours they had been to Sodom and Gomorrah. No great man was born in Jericho: no heroic deed was ever done in her. She has been called "the key" and "the guardhouse" of Judæa; she was only the pantry. She never stood a siege, and her inhabitants were always running away.[1]

3. The host advanced straight into Jericho and captured it. Rahab, who had sheltered the two spies sent by Joshua to reconnoitre the town and helped them to escape in safety, had gathered her father and mother and other relatives together; and they were now led forth to a place of safety outside the camp of Israel. The rest of the inhabitants, without exception, were slain with the edge of the sword; the city was burned, and everything

[1] G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 267.

was consumed except the vessels of gold and silver, of brass and iron. And not only was the proud "City of Palmtrees" thus utterly destroyed, but Joshua pronounced a solemn curse on any one who attempted to rebuild it: he should lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son should he set up the gates of it (Josh. vi. 26). There was no reason in itself why the city should not be rebuilt. Taking its fine position into account, there was every reason why it should. But by perpetuating the destruction, Joshua was perpetuating the faith that destroyed it.

¶ The capture of Jericho is the most popular of all Joshua's exploits. And yet it is the one about which we should be most cautious; for the narrative is composed of two accounts, one very ancient, which knows nothing beyond Joshua and the people, a silent invasion and a sudden storming and capture of the town, and another which introduces into the story the sacred procession, the priests, the Ark of the Covenant, and the portentous crumbling of the walls at the sound of the trumpets. What were the real facts of this bold stroke? Whether there really was a religious demonstration around the walls to divert attention from the siege operations, or whether Jehovah in this first stage of the forward march intervened with miraculous aid, we are no longer in a position to say. All those, therefore, who are anxious to teach nothing but what is certain will be well advised not to lay stress on the details of this campaign. One thing only we can be sure of, that it remained indelibly impressed on the memory of Israel as the type of the wars in which Jehovah Zebaoth worked with His people and the victory was won by a display of faith.[1]

By Jericho's doom'd towers who stands on high,
With helmet, spear, and glittering panoply?
"The Christian soldier, like a gleaming star,
Trained in the wilderness to iron war."
Take off thy shoes, thy promis'd land is found,
The place thou standest on is holy ground.
"Take Thou the shield and buckler, stop the way
Against mine enemies! be Thou my stay!"
I am thy rock, thy castle: I am He
Whose feet have dried up the Egyptian sea:
Fear not, for I am with thee; put on might;
'Gainst thrones and powers of darkness is the fight.

[1] A. Westphal, *The Law and the Prophets*, 216.

"I go, if Thou go with me; ope the skies,
And lend me Heaven-attemper'd armories."
Gird Truth about thee for thy mailed dress,
And for thy breastplate put on Righteousness;
For sandals, beauteous Peace; and for thy sword
The two-edg'd might of God's unfailing word;
Make golden Hope thy helmet; on, and strive:—
He that o'ercometh in those courts shall live,
Whose crystal floor by heavenly shapes is trod,
"A pillar in the temple of my God."[1]

III.

Ai.

With one of those dramatic contrasts which are so characteristic of the prophetic narrative, the success at Jericho is followed by the tragedy at Ai—a tragedy deeper than at first they knew; for it was not merely the failure of an attack and the loss of men, but the breach of a great moral law, with the loss of stability and power which such a breach always entails.

1. Fresh from the success at Jericho, the Israelites turned their attention to the city of Ai. Acting upon advice given by spies Joshua sent an attacking force of only three thousand men, while the population of Ai numbered more than twelve thousand, defended by a powerful and well-trained army. The Israelites were repulsed with considerable slaughter, and thrown into the deepest humiliation.

They had expected an easy victory; and now, at the close of the day, we see Joshua and the leaders of Israel prone upon the earth, with dust upon their heads and their clothes rent. Israel had turned their backs upon their enemies, Israel had been defeated; and it seemed to them, as they lay thus in utter distress upon their faces, that God had forsaken them, that destruction lay before them, that they were lost. The leader's courage seemed to have forsaken him. The defeat was so unlooked for, so strange, so unaccountable that it blotted out the victory at Jericho, dimmed the Divine help at Jordan, and clouded the whole horizon of his hopes. He raised up his voice

[1] Isaac Williams, *The Cathedral*, 205.

in prayer, and said, "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!" It is now easily seen why Moses and the Lord particularly charged Joshua to be strong and courageous.

Simple but searching was the answer to his prayer: sin there was somewhere, exposing the people to the wrath of their God; and until the sinful thing was put away, the wrath and defeat would remain. By the divinely-guided lot, the offender was discovered. Urged by Joshua to acknowledge Jehovah as a just and all-seeing God, Achan confessed his sin—the sin of covetousness. He had taken of the precious things already devoted to Jehovah, and so had involved himself and all his people in the doom of things devoted. The "troubler" of Israel was stoned; his family and possessions were burned; and communion between Jehovah and His people was restored.

¶ "A lover of silver," this latter word being the common and proper word for covetous, in the Gospels and Epistles; as of the Pharisees in Luke xvi. 14; and associated with the other characters of men in perilous times, 2 Tim. iii. 2, and its relative noun φιλαργυρία given in sum for the root of *all* evil in 1 Tim. 10, while even the authority of Liddell and Scott in the interpretation of πλεονεξία itself as only the desire of getting more than our share, may perhaps be bettered by the authority of the teacher, who, declining the appeal made to him as an equitable μεριστής (Luke xii. 14–46), tells his disciples to beware of covetousness, simply as the desire of getting more than we have got. "For a man's life consisteth not in the *abundance* of things which he possesseth."[1]

¶ One act of disobedience led to Adam's expulsion from Paradise. It was one sin which brought darkness and death into our world at first. And even now great mischief, sometimes death, will follow one wrong act. One bar of iron pushed in among the wheels of the most delicate machine will smash and destroy it. One defect in the axle of the locomotive engine is enough to smash it, wreck the train, and hurl death and destruction all round. One leak in the ship is enough to start it on the way to wreckage.[2]

[1] Ruskin, *On the Old Road*, ii. § 162.

[2] Charles Leach, *Sermons to Working-Men*, 197.

2. The sin of Achan punished, God now roused Joshua from the dejection into which he had fallen by telling him to go forth, and Ai should be given into his hands. Joshua practised a remarkable stratagem upon his foes, reserving his main force in ambush, while a small detachment attacked the city and drew the defenders out, slaying them to a man, the king himself being slain by Joshua's own hand. At the close of this victorious expedition, Joshua held a service of thanksgiving on Mount Ebal. The altar was in accordance with the Mosaic tradition; no tool was lifted on it. The victorious chief built the altar, the Levites appearing as bearers of the ark, and, as such, being called priests. Joshua, though an Ephraimite, was the principal celebrant. He read the Law. And as he solemnly read, whether the blessing or the curse, each several item was responded to by the Amens that thundered forth from thousands of throats, and rolled in reverberating echoes through the hills.

¶ The following account of the signing of the Scottish Covenant, on Feb. 28th, 1638, in Greyfriars Church and churchyard, is given in Cunningham's *Church History of Scotland*: "All were invited to come forward and sign. The aged Earl of Sutherland was the first to append his name. He was followed by Sir Andrew Murray, the minister of Abdy, in Fife. Then high-born and low-born together crowded forward to add their signatures. When all in the church had signed the solemn document, it was taken out to the church-yard, and laid upon a flat grave-stone. The enthusiasm of the crowd rose to its greatest height. Men and women were alike ambitious to subscribe their names. Some wrote after their signatures, 'till death'; others could not restrain their feelings, and wept. This went on for hours, till every part of the parchment was covered, and the subscribers had only room to write their initials; and dark night alone put an end to the scene. Henderson afterwards described it as 'the day of the Lord's power, wherein they had seen His people most willingly offer themselves in multitudes, like the dew of the morning.' 'It may well be said of this day,' says another old writer, 'Great was the day of Jezreel.' It was a day wherein the arm of the Lord was revealed—a day wherein the princes of the people were assembled to swear fealty and allegiance to that great King whose name is the Lord of Hosts."[1]

[1] J. Cunningham, *Church History of Scotland*, ii. 82.

IV.

The Gibeonites.

1. The successes and terrible reprisals of the Israelites shook the Canaanitish populations of the south which had not been touched and decided them to take concerted action. The coalition aimed ostensibly at punishing the Gibeonites, who, moved to fear by the recent successes of Israel and by the fame of Israel's God, sought to save themselves from their probable doom by making league with the conquerors. The clever cunning with which they posed as travellers from a very far country, eager to make a league with the now famous people of Jehovah, threw the Israelites completely off their guard. Their old shoes and old bottles and old bread, and their wily speeches and other fine fetches completely circumvented Joshua, till he made a covenant of peace with a cruel and corrupt people that he had been commanded to sweep off the face of the earth.

Up to this moment the initiative had always been taken by the Lord. Now for the first time it is taken by Joshua and the people. They "asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." And for this, and for other like mistakes of ignorance, and simplicity, and over-leniency, both Joshua and all Israel suffered long and bitterly. When the guile of the Gibeonites was discovered, the furious people were for slaying them. Joshua, however, would not permit this; but, with a solemn curse, he condemned them, for their guile, to be slaves of the sanctuary of Israel's God.

¶ The essence of lying is in deception, not in words: a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eye attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence; and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded; so that no form of blinded conscience is so far sunk as that which comforts itself for having deceived, because the deception was by gesture or silence, instead of utterance; and, finally, according to Tennyson's deep and trenchant line, "A lie which is half a truth is ever the worst of lies."[1]

2. Then five southern kings, headed by the king of Jerusalem, conspired to take revenge upon Gibeon for weakening the

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (*Works*, vii. 352).

confederacy by its alliance with Israel. In terror, the Gibeonites appealed to Joshua, who, with the Divine assurance of success, at once responded. His confidence was justified; for Jehovah granted him a signal victory. The Canaanites were panic-stricken, and gave but little resistance to the Israelites, who slew them right and left; and those who could get away fled through the defiles westward, over roads broken by ascent and descent which led to Beth-horon, five miles distant. In making the descent to the town, down a precipitous and rocky defile, the refugees were arrested by a hail-storm, which slew many of them.

Standing on the summit of Upper Beth-horon, Joshua watched the foe flying in helpless confusion towards the western lowlands. The Lord had already delivered them into his hands, and only time was needed to render the rout complete and enable his forces to avenge themselves on their enemies. But the day was far advanced, and he feared the Canaanites might yet make good their escape.

At this point our narrative quotes some lines from an ancient collection of poems called the Book of Jashar. The lines quoted here are given as a prayer uttered by Joshua to Jehovah in the presence of Israel: they run as follows:—

> "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
> And thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.
> And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed,
> Until the people had avenged themselves upon
> their enemies."

These lines were originally a poetic figure, similar to those in the Song of Deborah, which tells us that:—

> "They fought from heaven,
> The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

Apparently Joshua with the main battle of Israel was then to the west of Gibeon, so that the sun appeared in the eastern sky over the city. The valley of Ajalon stretches S.W. from Beth-horon, and over it could be discerned the setting moon. The rout of the enemy was complete, and the prayer of Israel was for time for effective pursuit, for a fair opportunity of reaping all the fruits of a great victory. And the prayer was granted; in that chase of many miles, there was a great slaughter

of wretched fugitives, blinded and battered by the storm. With the ready hyperbole of Oriental rhetoric, the poets of Israel sang that this had been no common day, the very sun and moon had stood still in heaven to ensure the triumph of the chosen people.

¶ Moon and sun are continually found associated in the Old Testament as two great lights, destined, the one to rule the day, the other the night, intended to fix days, months, and years, and also to serve for the miraculous manifestations portending remarkable events to come. Although their duty of regulating time requires a certain regularity of movements and periods, it is not considered impossible that their course should be arrested or even turned back at the command of Joshua and other men loved by Yahwe. An ancient Jewish poet, singing of Joshua's victory over the Amorites, attributes to that commander the boast of having arrested the sun and moon; and certainly one could not conceive a more effective flight of fancy, or one more fitted for the heights of an heroic and lyrical composition. But, as has happened in other ancient nations, so among the Jews also the material of heroic songs passed not infrequently into history, and as history this episode in the wars of Israel is even now regarded by many. According to the narrative in the historical portion of the book bearing the name of Isaiah, that prophet is said not only to have stopped the sun, but to have turned it back. So, too, of Elimelech, husband of Naomi, an obscure tradition relates that he stopped the sun; and according to the Vulgate of 1 Chron. iv. 22, a descendant of Judah, son of Jacob, is said to have accomplished a like feat.[1]

3. On his return to Makkedah, Joshua brought forth the five kings out of the cave to which they had fled for shelter, and slew them with his own hand. Their bodies were then buried in the cave. The victory of Beth-horon did not stand alone. In like manner throughout the whole of the southern campaign Jehovah fought for Israel and subdued the country before Joshua.

¶ In an army, if once the confidence of the soldiers in their officers is destroyed, the whole organization is relaxed, discipline gives way, military courage rapidly sinks, and troops who under other circumstances would have been full of fire, enthusiasm, and steady valour, degenerate into a dispirited and vacillating mob. With nations it is not very different. Few things contribute so much to the strength and steadiness of a national character as the

[1] G. Schiaparelli, *Astronomy in the Old Testament*, 40.

consciousness among the people that in every great struggle or difficulty they will find their natural leaders at their head—men in whom they have perfect confidence, whose interests are thoroughly identified with their own, who are placed by their position above most sordid temptations, to whom they are already attached by ties of property, tradition, and association. A nation must have attained no mean political development before it can choose with intelligence its own leaders, and it is happy if in the earlier stages of its career the structure of society saves it from the necessity, by placing honest and efficient men naturally at its head.[1]

V.

Lake Merom.

1. The decisive victory over the Amorites at Gibeon exposed the states which had fancied themselves secure behind the mountainous regions of Palestine. At the instigation of Jabin, king of Hazor, a coalition was formed which appealed to all those who wished to make a supreme effort to thrust back the invader. But the rapidity of Joshua's marches once more foiled the enemy's enterprise.

The distance he had to go was about seventy miles, and Josephus says the march was made in five days. When Joshua was within a few miles of the enemy God spoke to him saying, "Be not afraid because of them; for to-morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire." Suddenly, while the Canaanites supposed him to be far away, Joshua swooped down upon them, or, as the original has it, fell upon them like a thunderbolt. Thrown into confusion, their numbers impeding their progress, they were put to the sword. Then ensued a panic rivalling the one at Gibeon. Having pursued them for a time, Joshua returned and invested Hazor, burning it, and destroying the inhabitants, including the great King Jabin himself. So he treated all the cities that had gone with the confederation, but spared the buildings. Nearly the whole of Palestine was now subject to Joshua. It is true that the whole of the people were not

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *A History of Ireland*, i. 280.

subdued; but, so far as was necessary for the great purpose Joshua had in view, Palestine was conquered. Thus, after these fierce but prosperous wars in which two kings on the east of the Jordan were defeated and dispossessed and thirty kings on the west, the weary land had rest.

¶ The Jewish scholars who edited the Book of Joshua during the exile held a theory that Joshua completed the conquest of Canaan; they expressed their views in numerous paragraphs, enumerating among the places conquered by him all the districts of Palestine, and most of its important cities. This view is directly contradicted by Judg. i., xviii., which state, as they now stand, that the process went on after the death of Joshua, and that even then the Israelites did not succeed in occupying the whole land. . . . When the combined action of Israel had secured a basis of operations in the valley of the Jordan and the central highlands, separate tribes and clans broke off on new ventures of their own. They found their opportunities in the weakness of isolated cities; in the need of some Canaanite prince for allies; or in the willingness of townsmen to hire out their pasture lands for tribute to the nomad herdsmen. Thus by degrees the Israelites spread themselves over the country, here and there establishing settlements that were practically small independent states, interspersed among the towns and territories of the Canaanites; elsewhere mingling with the natives, sometimes absorbing them, sometimes being absorbed by them. The Books of Judges and Samuel tell us how after some centuries this process issued in the formation of a single united Israelite state. It may be interesting to compare this invasion with the Saxon and Norman invasions of England. Israel, and many of the inhabitants of Canaan, like the Normans and Saxons, were closely allied in race; and Canaan, like England at the Conquest, included a heterogeneous mixture of peoples. But, unlike England, Canaan was not organized as a single state, and its civilization was higher than that of its invaders. There is a somewhat greater resemblance between the Israelite and the Saxon Conquest. It is true that the differences of race, manners, customs and religion between the Saxons and the Romanized Britons were greater than those between Israel and Canaan. But Roman Britain like Canaan was far more civilized than its invaders; the Saxon Conquest was gradual; it sometimes found its opportunity in an alliance with a native prince; it resulted in the foundation of separate states, which eventually united in a single kingdom.[1]

[1] W. H. Bennett, *Joshua and the Palestinian Conquest*, 72.

2. These wars of Joshua leave the last word yet to be said. The moral difficulty, let it be frankly confessed, is enormous: we should not have known how enormous, were it not for the New Testament. It is as the mystic tender light from the Gospels falls upon these ancient battle-fields that we shudder. Joshua had with his faith the terrible intolerance of the true believer. There is nothing more exterminating than the idea of the one God when it is not modified by the doctrine of the cross. And Joshua was ruthless, but with the ruthlessness there was also determined thoughtfulness towards his end. He slew, not because he delighted in cruelty, but because he was resolute to get the land for Israel, to satisfy the long desire of Moses, to fulfil what he believed to be the will of God. He slew, not because he loved blood, but because he was fixed in his resolution to overthrow idolatry, and the only way men could think of doing that then was by fire and sword. The world had not seen the more excellent way of Christ. And Joshua won his day.

> Foremost captain of his time,
> Rich in saving common-sense,
> And, as the greatest only are,
> In his simplicity sublime.[1]

¶ Hake, the biographer of General Gordon, says: "The work he had begun and was bent on finishing was fraught with peculiar perils. It demanded a tact, an energy, and a force of will almost superhuman. He had to deal not only with worthless and often mutinous governors of provinces, but with wild and desperate tribesmen as well; he had to disband 6000 Bashi-Bazouks, who were used as frontier guards, but who winked at slave-hunting and robbed the tribes on their own account; he had to subdue and bring to order and rule the vast province of the Bahr Gazelle, but now beneath the sway of the great slaver Sebehr. It was a stupendous task: to give peace to a country quick with war; to suppress slavery among a people to whom the trade in human flesh was life and honour and fortune; to make an army out of perhaps the worst material ever seen; to grow a flourishing trade and a fair revenue in the wildest anarchy in the world. The immensity of the undertaking; the infinity of details involved in a single step towards the end; the countless odds to be faced; the many pests—the deadly climate, the horrible vermin, the ghastly

[1] Tennyson.

itch, the nightly and daily alternation of overpowering heat and bitter cold—to be endured and overcome; the environment of bestial savagery and ruthless fanaticism—all these combine to make the achievement unique in human history. Like the adventurer in Browning's magnificent allegory, my hero was face to face with a vast and mighty wrong; he had everything against him, and he was utterly alone; but he stood for God and the right, and he would not blench. There stood the Tower of Evil —the grim ruined land, the awful presences, the hopeless task, the anarchy of wickedness and despair and wrath. He knew, he felt, he recognized it all; and yet—

> And yet
> Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
> And blew.—"*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*"[1]

[1] A. E. Hake, *The Story of Chinese Gordon*, 294. (Hake in the quotation uses "stag-horn"; Browning's word is "slug-horn.")

JOSHUA.

III.

The Resolute Reformer.

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The Resolute Reformer.

And the land had rest from war.—Josh. xi. 23.
As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.—Josh. xxiv. 15.

I.

Distribution of the Land.

Joshua was probably about ninety years of age when the conquest of Canaan was complete. But a very important part of his work had yet to be performed. It would not have been enough for him to assert the supremacy of Israel over the Canaanites, unless he had taken measures to follow up his victories by settling the people in their stead. The work of destruction must be succeeded by that of construction. The warrior must give place to the administrator and statesman.

1. The aged chief of Jehovah's armies had earned his rest, but he was oppressed no less with anxiety than with fatigue. He had a real danger to contend with in the supineness of the Israelites who were not yet possessed of their territory. Weary of the war, distrustful of the support of Ephraim and Judah, whose whole strength was diverted to their political organization, and finding themselves in the midst of Canaanites who were often of the same race and language as themselves, they indolently slipped into treaties with the natives and gradually lost their individuality and religion through reciprocal encroachments and alliances in which Baal had more to gain than Jehovah.

¶ We need higher qualities to bear with good fortune than with bad.[1]

¶ This Nebuchadnezzar curse, that sends men to grass like oxen, seems to follow but too closely on the excess or continuance of national power and peace. In the perplexities of nations, in their

[1] *Maxims of La Rochefoucauld*, trans. by Walter Scott, 6.

struggles for existence, in their infancy, their impotence, or even their disorganization, they have higher hopes and nobler passions. Out of the suffering comes the serious mind; out of the salvation, the grateful heart; out of endurance, fortitude; out of deliverance, faith: but when they have learned to live under providence of laws and with decency and justice of regard for each other, and when they have done away with violent and external sources of suffering, worse evils seem to arise out of their rest; evils that vex less and mortify more, that suck the blood though they do not shed it, and ossify the heart though they do not torture it. And deep though the causes of thankfulness must be to every people at peace with others and at unity in itself, there are causes of fear, also, a fear greater than of sword and sedition: that dependence on God may be forgotten, because the bread is given and the water sure; that gratitude to Him may cease, because His constancy of protection has taken the semblance of a natural law; that heavenly hope may grow faint amidst the full fruition of the world; that selfishness may take place of undemanded devotion, compassion be lost in vainglory, and love in dissimulation, that enervation may succeed to strength, apathy to patience, and the noise of jesting words and foulness of dark thoughts to the earnest purity of the girded loins and the burning lamp. About the river of human life there is a wintry wind, though a heavenly sunshine; the iris colours its agitation, the frost fixes upon its repose. Let us beware that our rest become not the rest of stones, which, so long as they are torrent-tossed and thunder-stricken, maintain their majesty, but when the stream is silent, and the storm passed, suffer the grass to cover them and the lichen to feed on them, and are ploughed down into dust.[1]

2. Joshua, vexed at their listlessness in a cause which was Jehovah's, urged them to send representatives from each tribe throughout the land and bring back a plan of the cities in the various districts thereof, to be solemnly apportioned to the tribes by lot. On their return, Joshua collected all the information and cast lots, and the apportionment was made at Shiloh, before the tent of meeting. What exactly was each one's portion we cannot know for certain. The division was never so definite as the later calculations of the Priestly survey would imply. When Joshua had settled all the tribes, he obtained for himself a modest inheritance among the hills of his own tribe of Ephraim. It was a rugged spot in his native district at Timnath-serah ("the portion

[1] Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, ii. Pt. iii. (*Works*, iv. 30).

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that remains"), the name being probably then applied to the spot as it was the last allotment. It is suggestive of the unselfishness and simplicity of Joshua's character that he should have selected a home for himself among the deep valleys and rugged hills of Timnath-serah. "First in service, last in reward." He had done a great work, yet received no exceptional recompense.

¶ The "wages" of every noble Work do yet lie in Heaven or else Nowhere. Not in Bank-of-England bills, in Owen's Labour-bank, or any the most improved establishment of banking and money-changing, needest thou, heroic soul, present thy account of earnings. Human banks and labour-banks know thee not; or know thee after generations and centuries have passed away, and thou art clean gone from "rewarding,"—all manner of bank-drafts, shop-tills, and Downing-street Exchequers lying very invisible, so far from thee! Nay, at bottom, dost thou need any reward? Was it thy aim and life purpose to be filled with good things for thy heroism; to have a life of pomp and ease, and be what men call "happy," in this world, or in any other world? I answer for thee deliberately, No![1]

II.

Joshua's Farewell and Death.

The years of rest became years of wisdom. Joshua felt more and more how much of his task was left unfinished. It was one thing to remove evil roots, and cleanse the land; another thing to keep his own nation clean in it. The twenty-fourth chapter of Joshua is a pathetic close to a book of battles. It is the confession of all true warriors that it is easier to win a battle than to fight against sin day by day; it is easier to capture the impregnable fort, than to keep the heart pure to God.

1. Joshua hears that more or less everywhere local sanctuaries are corrupting the disloyal conquerors and Jehovah is no longer the uncontested King of Israel. So the old soldier returns to fight one more battle—harder than all the rest. He convenes the great Israelite assembly at Shechem, and there, in a speech which recalls that of Moses in the plains of Moab or that of St. Paul

[1] Carlyle, *Past and Present*.

taking leave of the Ephesian elders, Joshua rehearses the whole plan of God. He expresses the strongest solicitude for what he knows the public happiness to depend on—the preservation of true religion, and consequently of virtue, in opposition to the superstitious follies and shocking vices of the nations round them. He recapitulates Jehovah's blessings and Israel's crimes and duties, and gathers all his failing strength to remind the chosen people that all their future and salvation depend on their loyalty to the head of the theocracy, Jehovah, their King.

No one can read this farewell speech without being moved. There is first the brief recapitulation of the mighty acts of the Lord, and then the trumpet call to decision: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Here is a statement of perfect liberty, but of courageous warning; he puts the truth of their position plainly before them. They were to choose whom they would serve; he taught them this important moral truth that, if men will not choose to serve God, they will still be servants, that is, they will be enslaved by Satan.

These words were the last utterance of a man whose days on earth were run, and who spoke from that commanding eminence which looks at once upon the clearness of the earthly past and the dimness of the heavenly future, with the wisdom of aged experience and the awe of coming death. He stood amongst them, a monumental relic of the times pushed back, by a stirring century of change, into remote history; one who had toiled in Egyptian quarries, had crossed the sand of the Red Sea, had shrunk from the thunders of Sinai. He knew more than they thought of their secret idolatrous inclinations; he would have no half-hearted renunciation. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He would bind the nation so, with cords, "even unto the horns of the altar." He made the very stone, which "had heard all the words of the Lord," be a witness to them, lest they should deny their God.

¶ The "great stone," like Jacob's stone at Bethel, was one of those sacred monoliths which were among the apparatus of early

Israelite, as of other primitive religions. They were known in Israel as *maççēbas* or "pillars." Having set up this *maççēba*, "Joshua said to all the people, This stone shall bear witness against us; it has heard all the words of Jehovah which he spoke with us, and it shall bear witness against you, lest ye deny your God." In the existing narrative there is no record that Jehovah had spoken; possibly Joshua's words are regarded as Jehovah's; or else the tradition has been mutilated. Perhaps in its original form it told how Joshua set up in the sanctuary at Shechem the tables of stone received by Moses from Jehovah at Sinai, and carried by the Israelites throughout their wanderings. The idea of a stone bearing witness is still found among the nomad Arabs. Doughty tells us (*Arabia Deserta*, ii. 538) that he was informed concerning a great bank of stones on the pilgrim road to Mecca, that "Every pilgrim who casts a stone thereon has left a witness for himself, for his stone shall testify in the resurrection that he fulfilled the pilgrimage."[1]

2. The simple but impressive ceremony which ratified the covenant thus renewed consisted of two parts—the writing of the account of the transaction in "the book of the law," and the erection of a great stone, whose grey strength stood beneath the green oak, a silent witness that the Israelites, of their own choice, after full knowledge of what the vow meant, had reiterated their vow to be the Lord's. Thus on the spot made sacred by so many ancient memories, the people ended their wandering and homeless life, and passed into the possession of the inheritance, through the portal of this fresh acceptance of the covenant, proclaiming thereby that they held the land on condition of serving God, and writing their own sentence in case of unfaithfulness. It was the last act of the assembled people, and the crown and close of Joshua's career.

¶ There is a solemn choice in life. Life and death, light and darkness, truth and lies are set before us. At every instant the cry comes for us to choose one or the other, and the choice of one involves the putting away of the other. And we must choose. That is one of the certainties of life. There is no such thing as offering one hand to God and another to evil; one hand to the self-sacrifice of Christ and the other to the covetousness of the world. You cannot serve God and Mammon. You cannot follow

[1] W. H. Bennett, *Joshua and the Palestinian Conquest*, 83.

Jesus at home, and your own pleasure in your outward life. Your life, whether you like it or not, becomes of one piece.[1]

¶ On the morning of his wedding-day, James Taylor, the father of Hudson Taylor, was haunted by the words "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," probably heard at some of the Methodist services, and unheeded, until, as he threshed out wheat in preparation for his bride, the responsibility of the step he was taking was borne in upon him. The words would not leave him.

"Hour after hour went by. The sun rose high over the hills, lighting the white-roofed village where the bride was waiting. Taylor was due there long before noon, and had yet to don wedding apparel. But all, all was forgotten in this first, great realization of eternal things. Alone upon his knees among the straw the young stone-mason was face to face with God. 'As for me' had taken on new meaning. The fact of personal responsibility to a living though unseen Being—Love infinite and eternal, or Justice as a consuming fire—had become real and momentous as never before. It was the hour of the Spirit's striving with this soul, the solemn hour when to yield is salvation. And there alone with God James Taylor yielded. The love of Christ conquered and possessed him, and soon the new life from above found expression in the new determination: 'Yes, we will serve the Lord.'"[2]

3. It was at Shechem also, in full assembly of Israel, that Joshua celebrated the fulfilment of the promise by laying the bones of Joseph at last to rest. They had remained, waiting for deliverance, in Egypt for many, many years. "God will surely visit you," said Joseph, dying, "and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." They had been taken from Egypt that terrible night, and crossed the sea with the escaping host. They had rested at Sinai, gone through the wilderness, accompanied the conquest—their Palladium, the immortal witness of what Israel had done in Egypt, and was to be in Canaan—and, on this solemn day, of all that Israel had attained. And now, after so many restless years, they were put to sleep at last, in the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

His task ended, Joshua retired to his inheritance; but the influence of his character and life was felt as long as he lived, and

[1] S. A. Brooke, *Sunshine and Shadow*, 194.
[2] *Hudson Taylor in Early Years*, 5.

afterwards. At last he died, one hundred and ten years old, "and they buried him."

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party thou shalt stand,
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the dust against our land?
Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 'tis Truth alone is strong.
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around her throng
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her from all wrong.

Backward look across the ages and the beacon-moments see,
That, like peaks of some sunk continent, jut through Oblivion's sea;
Not an ear in court or market for the low foreboding cry
Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers, from whose feet earth's chaff must fly;
Never shows the choice momentous till the judgment hath passed by.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.[1]

III.

Joshua's Character.

There is no character that is brought before us with such detail in Holy Scripture, and about which we have so few blemishes recorded, as the character of Joshua, the son of Nun.

1. Joshua stands out from the Bible pages as the type of a great soldier, to whom great causes were committed, and by whom great things were done. His work was the conquest and dis-

[1] J. R. Lowell, *The Present Crisis.*

tribution of the Promised Land. In this he showed not only the valour of a warrior, but the justice, gentleness, forbearance, humility, disinterestedness of an exemplary ruler, leading his people to victory, giving to each his inheritance. It was his utter indifference to all selfish considerations and to human opinion, and his complete and constant submission to the revealed will of God, that enabled him triumphantly to accomplish his God-appointed task.

¶ There have been soldiers who were religious in spite of their being soldiers—some of them in their secret hearts regretting the distressing fortune that made the sword their weapon; but there have also been men whose energy in religion and in fighting has supported and strengthened each other. Such men, however, are usually found in times of great moral and spiritual struggle, when the brute force of the world has been mustered in overwhelming mass to crush some religious movement. They have an intense conviction that the movement is of God, and as to the use of the sword, they cannot help themselves; they have no choice, for the instinct of self-defence compels them to draw it. Such were the Ziskas and Procopses of the Bohemian reformation; the Gustavus Adolphuses of the Thirty Years' War; the Cromwells of the Commonwealth, and the General Leslies of the Covenant. Ruled supremely by the fear of God, and convinced of a Divine call to their work, they have communed about it with Him as closely and as truly as the missionary about his preaching or his translating, or the philanthropist about his homes or his rescue agencies. To God's great goodness it has ever been their habit to ascribe their successes; and when an enterprise has failed, the causes of failure have been sought for in the Divine displeasure.[1]

2. Joshua was the first of an order that seems to many a moral paradox—an enthusiastic fighter, yet a devoted servant of God. His mind ran naturally in the groove of military work. To plan expeditions, to devise methods of attacking, scattering, or annihilating opponents, came naturally to him. Yet along with this the fear of God continually controlled and guided him. He would do nothing deliberately unless he was convinced that it was the will of God. In all his work of slaughter, he believed himself to be fulfilling the righteous purposes of Jehovah. He regarded his enemies as God's enemies, and believed their de-

[1] W. G. Blaikie *The Book of Joshua*, 403.

struction necessary to keep Israel pure and a distinct race. His life was habitually guided by regard to the unseen. He had no ambition but to serve his God and to serve his country. He believed that God was behind him, and the belief made him fearless. His career of almost unbroken success justified his faith.

¶ Cromwell's habit of prayer is a notable feature of him. All his great enterprises were commenced with prayer. In dark inextricable-looking difficulties, his Officers and he used to assemble, and pray alternately, for hours, for days, till some definite resolution rose among them, some "door of hope," as they would name it, disclosed itself. Consider that. In tears, in fervent prayers, and cries to the great God to have pity on them, to make His light shine before them. They, armed Soldiers of Christ, as they felt themselves to be; a little band of Christian Brothers, who had drawn the sword against a great black devouring world not Christian, but Mammonish, Devilish,—they cried to God in their straits, in their extreme need, not to forsake the Cause that was His. The light which now rose upon them,—how could a human soul, by any means at all, get better light? Was not the purpose so formed like to be precisely the best, wisest, the one to be followed without hesitation any more? To them it was as the shining of Heaven's own Splendour in the waste-howling darkness; the Pillar of Fire by night, that was to guide them on their desolate perilous way. *Was* it not such? Can a man's soul, to this hour, get guidance by any other method than intrinsically by that same,—devout prostration of the earnest struggling soul before the Highest, the Giver of all Light; be such *prayer* a spoken, articulate, or be it a voiceless, inarticulate one? There is no other method. "Hypocrisy"? One begins to be weary of all that. They who call it so, have no right to speak on such matters. They never formed a purpose, what one can call a purpose. They went about balancing expediencies, plausibilities; gathering votes, advices; they never were alone with the *truth* of a thing at all.[1]

3. He met with his reward, the highest that life can yield: he turned many to righteousness. All through his reign we hear of no idolatry, no alliance with the heathen, no counterfeit and private priesthoods, no worship in high places; none of these transgressions which so often challenged God's vengeance in the

[1] Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship.*

later history of the race. His personal example and authority had held the traditions of Sinai unbroken, had kept worship and religion pure.

¶ Joshua was strong and wise and true to the great trust committed to his care by the people and by God; and amid the stars that shine in the firmament of heaven, not the least bright and clear is the lustre of Joshua, the son of Nun, who was the antetype of the risen and ascended Saviour, and whose worthiest epitaph, as written by a subsequent hand, is—

JOSHUA,
The Son of Nun,
The Servant of
Jehovah.[1]

Servant of God, well done!
Rest from thy loved employ;
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master's joy.

At midnight came the cry,
"To meet thy God prepare!"
He woke,—and caught his Captain's eye;
Then, strong in faith and prayer,

His spirit, with a bound,
Left its encumbering clay;
His tent, at sunrise, on the ground,
A darkened ruin lay.

The pains of death are past,
Labour and sorrow cease;
And life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.[2]

[1] F. B. Meyer, *Joshua and the Land of Promise*, 188.
[2] James Montgomery.

CALEB.

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CALEB.

My servant Caleb, because he . . . hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went.—Num. xiv. 24.

CALEB is one of the finest characters in the Bible. He is a stalwart, honest character, a man who obeyed God without question, who never feared to do his duty, and never turned his back on an enemy. His father, Jephunneh, is described as "the Kenezite." The Kenezites were outside the pale of the chosen people. Thus Caleb was not of Israelitish birth or descent. He was of an alien people. He was one of the first-fruits of the Gentile harvest of which Jethro, Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, and many others were samples and signs. Yet this man, a stranger to Israel by birth, became one of Israel's most illustrious ornaments. In spirit and service he was "an Israelite indeed." The son of the Kenezite was a true son of God.

I.

THE WITNESS.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.—Num. xiii. 30.

1. The year that followed the Exodus was a wonderful one for the children of Israel. It was spent at the foot of Mount Sinai, where measures were taken to organize them into a theocratic commonwealth. It was here that they received the Decalogue. It was here that Moses, as God's viceroy, gathered about him the princes and the forty elders, the former of whom constituted the Upper and the latter the Lower House of Parliament. And it was here that an army of able-bodied men was mustered and mobilized under Joshua as commander-in-chief. Thus, in

twelve months, the people who had escaped from Egypt a mere rabble of slaves were transformed into a well-organized and formidable nation.

And now at length they stood facing the land towards which all hearts were yearning. The time was ripe. Everything hinged upon a concerted movement to take possession. But the people must deliberately choose. Moses could lead them only with their will. Accordingly, a committee was representatively appointed, one member from each tribe, through whose eyes the people might see the land and upon the basis of whose report they might act.

2. The men did their work thoroughly, traversing the valleys and climbing the hills, viewing the oliveyards and vineyards, and skirting the slopes of Hebron where the Anakim dwelt. After forty days' search they returned, bringing with them a branch with one cluster of grapes, and also a specimen of the pomegranates and the figs. On the whole, their report was very gloomy. They had, of course, some good things to say about the productiveness of the land, but they gave a very alarming account of the people: "The people be strong that dwell in the land." "All the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature; . . . . we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

¶ Thou camest to spy out the land of promise; go not back without one cluster of grapes to show thy brethren for their encouragement. Let them see that thou hast tasted of the wine, by the gladness of thy heart; and that thou hast been anointed with the oil, by the cheerfulness of thy countenance; and hast fed of the milk and honey, by the mildness of thy disposition, and the sweetness of thy conversation. This heavenly fire would melt thy frozen heart, and refine and spiritualize it, but it must have time to operate. Thus pursue the work till something be done, till thy grace be in exercise, thy affections raised, and thy soul refreshed with thy delights above. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.[1]

3. The children of Israel, who had counted on an easy victory, gave way to a cowardly despair, even before the report was brought to its conclusion. They heard the words, "The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great,"

[1] Richard Baxter.

and there was an immediate outburst of panic and confusion. Caleb, and at this point in the history he alone, "stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." His associates in the exploration, however, repeated their discouraging reports. The whole work of the Exodus and of Sinai seemed on the point of being frustrated: First, there was the despairing wish, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Would God, we had died in this wilderness!" Then there was the natural result of that backward look, "Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" Then the thought passed into a deliberate purpose, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." And then the two who had not yielded to the first impulse of fear—Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun—stood forward against the madness of the people. They "rent their clothes" in passionate protest against the rebellious cowardice of the people. They testified once more that the land to which they had been sent was an exceedingly good land; that the Lord Jehovah was able to bring them into it, and give it them; that the people of the land would be as "bread" for them to devour. They ended with the watch-word of all true hero-souls, "The Lord is with us: fear them not." The others had measured themselves against the trained soldiers and giants, and were in despair. These two measured Amalekites and Anakim against God, and were jubilant. They do not dispute the facts, but they reverse the implied conclusion, because they add the governing fact of God's help.

¶ Once Frederick the Great wrote to one of his generals, "I send you against the enemy with 60,000 men." But, when the troops were numbered, it was found that there were only 50,000; and the officer was surprised and displeased. "There is no mistake," Frederick replied, "I counted you for 10,000 men." But who will say for how many God counts?[1]

4. Caleb and Joshua saw two things. First, they saw and put prominently forward the greatness of the opportunity; and they saw also that behind the land's strength there was a real weakness. It may have been that they detected the moral rottenness of the people among whom they had gone. But, whether or

[1] *The Morning Watch*, 1890, p. 104.

not, there was certainly in them the conviction that God was with Israel to carry through the purpose which He had begun—that astonishing conviction, one of the greatest of the world's miracles, which went with Israel through its history, and which still binds into unity for us the whole of the Old Testament. With that conviction burning in them they gave their voice for the forward policy.

But the heart had gone out of the people. They feared and trembled and refused to advance. It was in vain that Caleb pointed to the grapes he had gathered at Eshcol; it was in vain he tried to tempt his countrymen. There were even some who would have slain Caleb for his earnest exhortations. "Stone him! Stone him!" they cried; and there is no telling what would have happened, but for the fact that just then the cloud appeared above the tabernacle of the congregation to signify that God would speak with the people. And through Moses He delivered this message: "How long will this people despise me? and how long will they not believe in me? . . . Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my signs, which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have tempted me these ten times and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that despised me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it."

¶ If Mistrust and Timorous had been prepared to face the dangers of the way, they, like Christian, would have reached the Celestial City. "Now when he was got up to the top of the Hill, there came two men running to meet him amain; the name of the one was *Timorous*, and the other *Mistrust*. To whom Christian said, Sirs, what's the matter you run the wrong way? *Timorous* answered, That they were going to the City of *Zion*, and had got up that difficult place; but said he, the further we go, the more danger we meet with, wherefore we turned, and are going back again. Yes, said *Mistrust*, for just before us lies a couple of Lyons in the way, (whether sleeping or waking we know not) and we could not think, if we came within reach but they would presently pull us in pieces.

Chr. Then said Christian, You make me afraid, but whither

shall I fly to be safe? If I go back to mine own Countrey, That is prepared for Fire and Brimstone, and I shall certainly perish there. If I can get to the Celestial City, I am sure to be in safety there, I must venture; To go back is nothing but death, to go forward is fear of death, and life everlasting beyond it. I will yet go forward. So *Mistrust* and *Timorous* ran down the Hill; and Christian went on his way."[1]

5. Caleb was an optimist. He dreamed dreams and saw visions. No wonder he possessed such a spirit, for he "*wholly followed* the Lord his God." This is a striking expression. In the Hebrew it is a pictorial word, and describes a ship going out at full sail. This was the reason of his optimism: he flung every power of body and soul and spirit like a free sheet to the winds of God's grace and God's Spirit and God's providence. He went in whole-heartedly for God and His cause, unhampered by any spirit of limitation. Caleb had something of Moses in him. He had an eye for the future. He was capable of Pisgah glimpses. His was one of those lives which seem always to be pitched upon a hill; he could see things afar off. He is the real hero of this enterprise; he has made the work of exploration his own. Joshua is the actual *conqueror* of Canaan; Caleb is the man who predicted the advantage of possessing it. But Caleb's confidence that "we are well able to overcome" was more than natural optimism; it was religious trust, as is plain from God's eulogium on him in Num. xiv. 24.

¶ We may compare Caleb, to use the metaphor of good old Gotthold, to a tree. The wind had been blowing—it was a dreadful hurricane, and Gotthold walked into a forest and saw many trees torn up by the roots; he marvelled much at one tree which stood alone and yet had been unmoved in the tempest. He said, "How is this? The trees that were together have fallen, and this alone stands fast!" He observed that when the trees grow too closely they cannot send their roots into the earth; they lean too much upon each other; but this tree, standing alone, had space to thrust its roots into the earth, and lay hold on the rock and stones; and so when the wind came it fell not. It was so with Caleb—he always would lay hold upon his God, not upon men; and so when the wind came he stood.[2]

[1] Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Cambridge edition, 172).

[2] C. H. Spurgeon.

¶ The Rev. F. B. Meyer, in course of an appreciation of the life and work of Dr. Paton, wrote: An invincible optimist! For him, no good cause can ever be a lost cause. I question if he has ever been permanently disappointed, or ever absolutely failed. "Impossible" and "impracticable" are words for which he has no use; and though they have probably been hurled often enough at his schemes, when first announced, they have been found to be inappropriate and untrue. A visionary, whose visions have been realized; a dreamer, whose dreams have clothed themselves in fact! At an age when ninety-nine men out of a hundred leave the conduct of affairs to others, he is in the forefront and thick of the fight; and the rest of us gladly recognize that he is in his right place, and that years have not diminished but enhanced his competence to lead in all that makes for the betterment of the people. His optimism and enthusiasm are so contagious that statesmen, bishops, deans, ministers of every religious body, philanthropists, and shrewd business men are swept into his orbit and become inspired by his aims. His motives are absolutely selfless; his soul is simple and pure as a child's; and the strength of his personality is fairly irresistible. When he begins to weave his web around you to secure your interest and co-operation, you may as well yield at once to his genial persuasiveness, for you will have to do so sooner or later. In fact, you would feel it mean to leave a load on those broad and burdened shoulders which you could lighten or remove.[1]

¶ Florence Nightingale did many things herself, but she was also the inspirer and instigator of more things which were done by others. She was able of her own initiative to institute considerable reforms; but she was a reformer on a larger scale through the influence which she exercised. Though she was in truth no magician, there were men on the spot who, not being able to understand the secret and sources of her power, seemed to find something uncanny in it. Our good friend, Colonel Sterling, who hated the intrusion of petticoats into a campaign, was very much puzzled. The thing seemed to him "ludicrous," as we have heard, but he had to admit that "Miss Nightingale queens it with absolute power"; and elsewhere he speaks of "the Nightingale power" as something mysterious and "fabulous." The secret, however, is simple. "The Nightingale power" was due to causes of which some were inherent in herself and others were adventitious. The inherent strength of her influence lay in the masterful will and practical good sense which gave her dominion over the minds of men. The adventitious sources of her power were

[1] J. Marchant, *J. B. Paton*, 106.

that she had both the ear and the confidence of Ministers, and the interest and sympathy of the Court. I have called this accession of influence "adventitious," but it also accrued to her, in a secondary degree, from the inherent force of her character.[1]

II.

The Reward.

Now therefore give me this mountain.—Josh. xiv. 12.

1. Now followed a period of thirty-nine years in which the children of Israel wandered to and fro, entangled in the wilderness. The life of Caleb, during those weary years, is recorded in the single sentence, "He wholly followed the Lord." In other words, he was doing his duty and biding his time. Not for a moment did he lose his confidence in the promise of God. Nor was he discontented or over-eager for action. He who "wholly follows the Lord," knows how to labour and to wait. So Caleb kept his soul in patience. He acquiesced in the postponement of his own heaven. He concealed his aspiration. He hid his contempt for the sordid throng. He gave no hint that he was above their business. He joined them on their own level, in their own work. He took up his brothers' cares — cares about inferior things. He put his hand to the duties of the desert when his heart was up in Canaan. He saw the people dropping out, one by one, until the entire generation that had come out of Egypt lay in graves along the way. He saw Moses climb to his lonely sepulchre, and heard his last farewell: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." And still the faith of Caleb failed not.

2. Then came the crossing of the Jordan, the taking of Jericho, the driving out of the native tribes and the distribution of the land. The deadly plague which befell the ten, and the nearly forty years' wandering which befell the people, the preservation of the lives of Caleb and Joshua only of all the nation above twenty years of age who came out of Egypt, followed by the ultimate conquest of the land, had been a sufficient vindication

[1] Sir Edward Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 214.

of the faithfulness of God and the truthfulness of Caleb and Joshua. Now, however, that the land was to be distributed among the conquerors, and there were still a few unconquered, although greatly weakened, districts—and notably the main stronghold of the Anakim of the south, within whose walls the last chief of the tribe held out against the conquerors—Caleb went to Joshua, his old comrade, repeated the story of forty years before, referred to the promise of Moses that he should possess this stronghold, and pleaded that the privilege might be given him to take it.

His case was a very strong one, his record good and fair. He had been frank when truth was unpopular and hard to speak, and loyal when defection was widespread; he had experienced Providential help and deliverances; he had retained the capacity, and won the moral right, to essay the capture of Hebron; he was an efficient man, but he was in absolute dependence on the sufficiency of God. His estate that was to be was still occupied by the enemy. He was not about to enter upon a peaceful occupation; it was a conquest that lay before him. The Lord had preserved his life during these forty years—preserved it, as he believes, that he might be permitted to conquer the sons of Anak.

3. It makes the blood run fast in a man's veins to read the courageous words of the grim old soldier. He stands there before Joshua and says: "I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, and to go out and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and cities great and fenced: it may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as the Lord spake." There is nothing in the Bible more wonderful in its way than Caleb's testimony at eighty-five years of age. Nor was this a mere boast. The old man was not self-deluded in the matter of his strength. He was ready for war, ready to storm the stronghold of Hebron. Jubilant in prospect of driving out the Anakim, Caleb had youth's strength and valour and optimism in extreme old age.

¶ One day when Signor had ended a delightful talk with Sir William Richmond, as this sympathetic friend was leaving the studio he said to me that he found Signor's interests and range of thought wider even than they were. "Well, to grow still at seventy-eight is youth," he added. Sir James Knowles spoke in much the same terms, and gave me his interpretation of the saying, "Whom the Gods love die young"; which was, that in mind they never grew old. Of this Sir James Knowles wrote to me later: "I am so glad you like my interpretation of that old proverb. This is how I put it down:—

> 'Whom the Gods love die young,' the proverb told;
> The meaning is they never can grow old
> However long their list of labours past;
> God-given youth is with them to the last.

You have the proof of this before your eyes every day, and long may it be so! I send him my best regards." Once, speaking of his own feeling, Signor told me the only difference he found in himself as he grew older was this—"I am interested in more things, and I feel younger instead of older. I know I am quite as eager, quite as much striving for improvement in my work, as I was at the beginning of life."[1]

> Therefore I summon age
> To grant youth's heritage,
> Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
> Thence shall I pass, approved
> A man, for aye removed
> From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.
>
> And I shall thereupon
> Take rest, ere I be gone
> Once more on my adventure brave and new:
> Fearless and unperplexed
> When I wage battle next,
> What weapons to select, what armour to indue.[2]

4. There is something very noble in Caleb's conception of a possession worth the having as that which involves toil and heroism on our part. God's best gifts are after all given on these conditions. It is "to him that overcometh" that the choicest

[1] M. S. Watts, *George Frederic Watts*, ii. 238.
[2] Browning, *Rabbi ben Ezra*.

blessings of the Apocalypse are given. The inheritance of the saints in light, like that of Caleb, is to be the inheritance of the conqueror. Caleb had caught this essential aspect of a noble life. The reward of the man who has done well is that he shall do more.

The fire had been smouldering in the heart of this man for forty-five years; and now in sight of the mountain it flamed up. All that time he had been waiting for an opportunity to have at the giants; and now that the hour had come, he proved himself no idle boaster. He drove the giants from one town to another, and finally they seem to have made their last stand in a strong town called Kirjath-sepher. In his eagerness to gain this town he offered the hand of his daughter Achsah to any warrior who should obtain possession of it, and the prize was claimed by Othniel. It was followed, in the striking story, which breathes in every word the spirit of a remote antiquity, by the grant with it of the "upper and the nether springs," that the city might not be, in any sense of the word, a barren and unfruitful heritage.

Of all the Israelites who received their inheritance in the Land of Promise, Caleb appears to have been the only one who succeeded in entirely expelling the native occupiers of the country. The Israelites generally seem to have made but poor headway against their strong and mighty foes, with their chariots of iron and fenced walls. Repeatedly we encounter the sorrowful affirmation that they were not able to drive them out. But Caleb was a notable exception. What though Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim (Josh. xiv. 15), what though his three grandsons, Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai, the sons of Anak, were prepared to yield their lives rather than give up possession (xv. 14), Caleb drove them out—not he indeed, but the Lord, who was with him, and gave him a victory that must have otherwise eluded even his strong hands. The man who "wholly followed the Lord" was alone wholly victorious.

¶ Nowhere is thoroughness more needed than in religious work, nowhere is slackness more prevalent. There are Christians who serve Christ as diligently and faithfully as they do their earthly work, and they shall not miss their reward; but many of Christ's servants would not be tolerated for a week by any other master. The poorest joint-stock company in the land is better

served by its directors than many congregations are by their office-bearers. There are no teachers anywhere so ignorant and so casual as certain Sunday-school teachers; there is no clerk in a dry-goods store dare treat his duty as lightly as some of the voluntary officers of the Christian Church. They will absent themselves without leave and without excuse; they will never inquire how their work is being done or whether it is done at all; they will not take the trouble to prepare themselves to do it, and they are not concerned when it fails in their hands. They will place their pleasure and their fancies, and their social engagements, and their imaginary ailments before their Christian duty. And it would be difficult to say how little must be the burden, how short must be the time, that they would be willing to count an obligation upon them and would be prepared to face. One is sometimes inclined to propose a general resignation of the Christian staff, and then an invitation to all who are prepared to do Christ's work as well as the work of the world is done, and it might be that three hundred thoroughgoing men like the Band of Gideon would do more for Christ than ten times the number of irresponsible casuals.[1]

5. How much longer Caleb lived after he claimed Hebron for his inheritance we do not know; but the language he uttered in his eighty-fifth year is very remarkable. What a sublime retrospect! He can look back on the voyage of his life and say, "I wholly followed the Lord." Such a retrospect can be won only by years of fighting the good fight. The people also acknowledged his faithful service. "Joshua blessed him," we read of Caleb in his mellow old age (Josh. xiv. 13). Joshua prayed for the aged hero and saint. Joshua sought God's anointing for the venerable soldier of Israel. Caleb reaped a harvest of sympathetic prayer. Joshua not only prayed for Caleb but commended him in the sight of Israel. He held him up to honour. He enthroned the brave veteran on the approbation of the people. So the man of complete devotion to God received honour of man.

¶ In February 1889, when he reached his seventieth birthday, Lowell was entertained to dinner by his friends in Boston. Describing the event in a letter to the wife of his English friend Leslie Stephen, Lowell says: "I was dined on my birthday, and praised to a degree that would have satisfied you, most partial even of your sex. But somehow I liked it, and indeed none but a

[1] John Watson, *The Homely Virtues*, 57.

pig could have helped liking the affectionate way it was done. I suppose it is a sign of weakness in me somewhere, but I can't help it. I *do* like to be liked. It gives me a far better excuse for being about (and in everybody's way) than having written a fine poem does. That'll be all very well when one is under the mould. But I am not sure whether one will care for it much. So keep on liking me, won't you?"[1]

¶ 19*th Feb.* 1826.—J(ames) B(allantine) came and sat an hour. I led him to talk of *Woodstock*; and, to say truth, his approbation did me much good. I am aware it *may*—nay, *must*—be partial; yet is he Tom Telltruth, and totally unable to disguise his real feelings. I think I make no habit of feeding on praise, and despise those whom I see greedy for it, as much as I should an under-bred fellow, who, after eating a cherry-tart, proceeded to lick the plate. But when one is flagging, a little praise (if it can be had genuine and unadulterated by flattery, which is as difficult to come by as the genuine mountain-dew) is a cordial after all.

13*th May* 1826.—I think very lightly in general of praise; it costs men nothing, and is usually only lip-salve. They wish to please, and must suppose that flattery is the ready road to the good will of every professor of literature. Some praise, however, and from some people, does at once delight and strengthen the mind, and I insert in this place the quotation with which Lord Chief Baron Shepherd concluded a letter concerning me to the Chief Commissioner (Adam): "Magna etiam illa laus et admirabilis videri solet tulisse casus sapienter adversos, non fractum esse fortunâ, retinuisse in rebus asperis dignitatem." I record these words, not as meriting the high praise they imply, but to remind me that such an opinion being partially entertained of me by a man of character so eminent, it becomes me to make my conduct approach as much as possible to the standard at which he rates it.[2]

[1] *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, ii. 410.
[2] *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, 128, 192.

ACHAN.

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ACHAN.

And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Of a truth I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel.—Josh. vii. 20.

THE chapter that gives the history of the sin of Achan is one of the darkest pages of the Word of God, but nevertheless it contains many precious lessons. It shows in an eminent degree the working of temptation in a man's heart before the evil deed is done; it shows the hardening that results after the committing of the sin; it shows how one man's sin may prove a snare to those about him; it shows how the most secret crime is bare before God; and it shows how God can and will bring about exposure and punishment. The very fact that the sin of Achan is so circumstantially narrated would itself lead us to infer some strong reason for its being so—that it was in a peculiar manner calculated to serve as a warning, and to impress the readers of the Bible in all ages with somewhat of that deep horror which thrilled through Israel at the time when the criminal was pointed out. It was the deed of but one man, yet to understand it aright it will be needful for us to look for a little at the position of the whole people; for the sin of Achan not only had an influence on all Israel after it was committed, but it was the special circumstances in which Israel stood just before this sin that gave to it its peculiar wickedness.

1. The Israelites were come out of Egypt, had ended their desert sojourn, had crossed the Jordan, had taken Jericho. A stern charge had been laid upon the invading army not to touch the spoil of Jericho. One part of the spoil was to be brought into the treasury: the rest was to be burnt with fire. A nation which had been taken from the midst of another nation by a strong hand not its own, and which was now to be brought into the inheritance of another nation by the outstretched arm of God,

must be reminded, at the very outset, of its dependence and of its responsibility; there must be no forgetfulness of the source of its strength, of the condition of its success, of the high purposes of its mission; there must be no selfish grasping, and no mean lust of getting, to interfere with the grandeur and the sanctity of its election; on this first occasion of all, a lesson was to be taught for all time as to the awfulness of privilege; as to the dreadful consequences of being brought very near to God, as His Church and His people, and forgetting or trifling with Him; as to the inseparable connexion between knowledge and duty, between light and accountability, between trust and reckoning.

2. Every single soldier in all Israel had heard Joshua's proclamation about Jericho; both what his men were to do till the walls fell and how they were to conduct themselves after the city had been given of God into their hands. But war is war; and the best of commanders cannot make war a silken work, nor can he hold down the devil in the hearts of all his men. In the hearts of many of them he may, if he first does it in his own heart, but scarcely in the hearts of them all. Night fell on the prostrate city, and the hour of temptation struck for Joshua and all his men. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life." And Joshua and all his men received the crown of life that night—all his men but one.

Was it a sudden gust of temptation that swept Achan before it when, with the rest of the host, he entered Jericho? Or was it that some long growth of unjudged evil flowered into that act which has made his name a reproach to all after time? It is impossible to say. Only the terribleness of his fate seems to indicate something more than a transient yielding to sin. This, at least, is clear, that in the late afternoon of the day of Jericho's capture, and before the lurid flames of its conflagration rose to heaven, he had pilfered one of those robes of exquisite texture for which the plain of Shinar was famous, together with gold and silver—the latter coined, the former in a wedge—and had borne them surreptitiously away.

¶ Theft is punished by Thy law, O Lord, and the law written in the hearts of men, which iniquity itself effaces not. For what

thief will abide a thief? not even a rich thief one stealing through want. Yet I lusted to thieve, and did it, compelled by no hunger, nor poverty, but through a cloyedness of well-doing, and a pamperedness of iniquity. For I stole that of which I had enough and much better. Nor cared I to enjoy what I stole, but joyed in the theft and sin itself. Behold my heart, O God, behold my heart, which Thou hadst pity upon in the bottom of the bottomless pit. Now, behold, let my heart tell Thee what it sought there, that I should be gratuitously evil, having no temptation to ill, but the ill itself. It was foul, and I loved it; I loved to perish, I loved mine own fault, not that for which I was faulty, but my fault itself. Foul soul, falling from thy firmament to utter destruction; not seeking aught through the shame, but the shame itself![1]

I.

The Sin.

But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the devoted thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the devoted thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.—Josh. vii. 1.

After a victory like that of Jericho, given so manifestly by Divine power, the people felt that it was unnecessary to take in full force the toilsome march against the little highland fortress of Ai. Three thousand men went up at Joshua's order—and fled before the men of Ai. In the long chase fell thirty-six men of the army which Israel believed invincible—invincible because the Lord of Hosts was with them. No wonder that a panic seized the people, that Joshua and the elders fell down in despair for a whole day before the ark of God. In the evening came the answer. Israel, said Jehovah, had sinned, and therefore Israel fell.

Those men of Israel were not less worthy than when they compassed Jericho a few brief days before. There was no obvious reason why they should not have sent the Canaanites flying before them as they did in fact send them a few days after. The signs seemed right for another triumph. And yet, as a matter of fact, there was a deep-lying reason why the army had no warrant in looking for victory that day. A vital nerve of Israel's

[1] *Confessions of St. Augustine.*

strength had been destroyed. A cankerworm was at the root of her best hopes. Disobedience, disloyalty, decay had entered. Under a certain tent in Judah's camp one might have found the fresh marks of a spade. And, if one had dug away the carefully laid earth, a curious display would have been brought to light—a Babylonian garment and a pile of gleaming gold.

1. Achan's sin was a *breach of trust*, for so the phrase "committed a trespass" might be rendered. The expression is frequent in the Pentateuch to describe Israel's treacherous departure from God, and has this full meaning here. The sphere in which Achan's treason was evidenced was "in the devoted thing." The spoil of Jericho was set aside for Jehovah, and to appropriate any part of it was sacrilege. God had said, "And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the devoted thing, lest when ye have devoted it, ye take of the devoted thing; so should ye make the camp of Israel accursed, and trouble it. But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are holy unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord." This was the Divine edict against which trespass had been made. In that restriction warning had been given beforehand that any man's sin would occasion general suffering, and bring a curse upon the whole camp. The universality of the punishment was calculated to impress upon the nation more strongly the necessity of perfect obedience, the danger of evil beginnings, the need of strengthening each other, and being careful every man alike for himself and for his neighbour. The sin was, therefore, something more than an act of disobedience. It was a violation of the Divine covenant. It was sacrilege, a robbery of God, an impious seizure, for base, selfish purposes, of that which belonged to Him.

¶ The Danes, having landed near the city of Worcester, from which most of the peaceful burghers had fled on their approach, looted the houses and the great church, and then made off to their long ships. The heavy sanctus bell of the cathedral, abandoned, one may suppose, by the rest of the marauders as too cumbersome to carry off, seemed to one man a desirable acquisition, and he lingered behind his comrades to get it. Presently, before he was able, loaded as he was, to join the retreating Danes, the townsmen returned. Doubtless from a distance they had been witnesses of many outrages, and right and left along their streets they now

saw signs of the violence of their foes; and in the heat of their rage and indignation they came upon the sacrilegious wretch upon whose shoulder was the sanctus bell. We will not try to picture the final scene; the Englishmen's blood was up, the Dane was caught redhanded in theft and sacrilege, and moreover there was probably not a man in all the throng who did not burn under a sense of some private wrong inflicted on him by the pirates. Upon the devoted head of the one the misdeeds of all were visited; and his skin, in attestation of his guilt and of his doom, was fastened to the church door.[1]

2. Achan's sin was a sin of *covetousness,* a sin that had to do with the love of worldly things. Andrew Fuller says that covetousness will probably prove the eternal overthrow of more characters among professing Christians than any other sin, because it is almost the only crime that can be indulged in and a profession of religion at the same time be supported. Achan, we should remember, was a professed servant of Jehovah. He was not a Canaanite; he was not a foreigner; he was a member of the commonwealth of Israel; he was a man of privilege, a man who had been admitted to the outward Church of that day, like Ananias and Sapphira of later days. He was not a poor man, whose family was starving. He belonged to the tribe of Judah, which was to have the first and largest lot in the land of Canaan. But he could not wait for what God gave him. If he had only been patient he would have had a good inheritance in the new country in a few months' time. He did not rob any man. He did not take what belonged to other people. That was not his fault. His fault was simply covetousness born of the selfishness which leads to rebellion. The unhappy Achan could not resist the desire to secure for himself a share of the booty. He sought his own selfish ends in the cause of God.

¶ How mean — not to give it a greater name — how mean was the sin of Achan. What a sin this was in a soldier, when he ought to have been filled with enthusiasm, with patriotism, with love to God, with great desires for his tribe and people. He saw a goodly Babylonish garment, and the shekels of silver, and a covetous gleam shot through his eyes, and all the soldier in him withered up, and he became a sneaking thief. What a contemptible figure—an Israelitish soldier a thief![2]

[1] W. Andrews, *Church Treasury,* 161. [2] J. McNeill.

¶ The criminal laws of a nation take cognizance only of overt actions. Covetousness is a motive within the breast which could only be guessed at by the law; its precedence to an act of theft could hardly be proved in the witness-box. The tenth commandment is altogether outside the boundaries of civil jurisprudence. Its presence in the Decalogue is a manifest proof of the spiritual intention and ethical character of the Sinaitic Code. It reminds us that Israel was to be not only a commonwealth but the people of Jehovah's possession. The Decalogue does more than lay down the duties of a citizen. It embraces within its purview more than the crimes which it desires to express. It looks ultimately to the cultivation of a better temper and a right spirit. Like the other parts of the Mosaic Law it aims at developing the consciousness of sin. Unless the Law had said, "Thou shalt not covet," Paul affirms that he would not have known what sin meant.[1]

3. Achan's sin *involved others* in ruin as well as himself. Observe that the sin is laid at the doors of the whole nation, while yet it was the secret act of one man. That is a strange "for" in Josh. vii. 1—the people did it; *for* Achan did it. Observe, too, with what bitter particularity his descent is counted back through three generations, as if to diffuse the shame and guilt over a wide area, and to blacken the ancestors of the culprit. Achan was the sinner; all Israel suffered. Those soldiers who marched against Ai were just as loyal as any that ever marched under Israelitish banners. They had all the advantage of Joshua's superior skill. And they were just as surely pushing forward the cause of righteousness in the subjugation of the land as at any later time. Yet they had no more chance of effecting the overthrow of Ai that day than they had of breaking into heaven: they went without God's blessing, disqualified, alone.

It is needless to discuss the question, how one guilty of sin should involve in the consequences of that sin those connected with him, whether by family or by social ties. It is simply a *fact*, admitting no discussion, and is equally evident when God's law in nature or when His moral law is set at defiance. The deepest reason of it lies, indeed, in this, that the God of nature and of grace is also the founder of society; for the family and society are not of man's devising, but of God's institution, and form part

[1] W. S. Bruce, *The Ethics of the Old Testament*, 165.

of His general plan. Accordingly, God deals with us not merely as individuals, but also as families and as nations. To question the rightness of this would be to question alike the administration, the fundamental principles, and the plan of God's universe.

¶ There is no sort of wrong deed of which a man can bear the punishment alone: you can't isolate yourself, and say that the evil which is in you shall not spread. Men's lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe: evil spreads as necessarily as disease.[1]

II.

The Confession.

When I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.—Josh. vii. 21.

1. The Israelites were filled with despondency. "The hearts of the people melted, and became as water." Joshua and the elders remained all day prostrate before the Ark with rent garments and dust on their heads, and were told, "There is a devoted thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the devoted thing from among you." To ascertain the guilty person each tribe was brought before Jehovah. By the casting of lots, or some other similar method, the tribe of Judah was taken. The clans of the tribe next presented themselves, and the Zerahites were indicated. Of the Zerahites the guilt was declared to be in the family of Zabdi. Finally, when the house of Zabdi were put to the ordeal, Achan, the son of Carmi, was pronounced to be the culprit. Joshua begged the unhappy man to "give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel," by confessing his sin, and Achan admitted that he had stolen from the spoils of Jericho a mantle from Shinar, two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels.

¶ Everybody who reads the best books will have long had by heart Thomas à Kempis's famous description of the successive steps of a successful temptation. There is first the bare thought

[1] George Eliot, *Adam Bede.*

of the sin. Then, upon that, there is a picture of the sin formed and hung up on the secret screen of the imagination. A strange sweetness from that picture is then let down drop by drop into the heart; and then that secret sweetness soon secures the consent of the whole soul, and the thing is done. That is true, and it is powerful enough. But Achan's confession to Joshua is much simpler, and much closer to the truth. "I saw the goodly Babylonish mantle, I coveted it, I took it, and I hid it in my tent." [1]

2. In Achan's confession we see the four steps of his transgression—"I saw, I coveted, I took them, and, behold, they are hid."

(1) "*I saw.*"—This implies something outside, or objective, as the philosophers would say—the garment, the silver, the gold. Not in me, but outside me. That is temptation—objective temptation—allurement. Achan saw before him, wholly within his reach, the glorious rich robes, the Babylonish garment, and the silver and the gold. He kept looking at them. Perhaps he said within his heart, "It can do no harm to look at them." But it was an evil heart that spoke in this way, and the evil heart deceived him. It said to him, "No, there is no harm in a look, or in a second, or in a third look." And by and by he could do nothing else but look. He forgot his task as a soldier. He saw the rich spoils. He stood still where they lay and still he looked. He saw and continued looking until the sight inflamed his soul. It was like the steady holding of a lens to catch the rays of the sun, and, by collecting and concentrating them, giving them a burning power: such was Achan's evil eye fixed on the glitter of garment and gold.

(2) "*I coveted.*"—This is not outside me, it is inside; not objective, but subjective. We call this appetite—a something within me set in motion by something without me. Written in my nature is a law that when certain things are seen outside me, they quicken the desire inside. And if I do not bring my will to bear upon my desire so as to control it, the desire passes into action. When once Achan's eyes lighted on that rich garment he never could get his eyes off it again. As Thomas à Kempis says, the seductive thing got into Achan's imagination, and the devil's

[1] A. Whyte.

work was done. Achan was in a fever now lest he should lose that goodly garment. He was terrified lest any of his companions should have seen that glittering piece. He was sure some of them had seen it and were making off with it.

He coveted the silver and the gold that belonged to God, and the Babylonish garment, which he ought to have destroyed. Up till this moment he was innocent, or nearly innocent. But now he was reaching out his heart to things that did not belong to him. He coveted them. For the moment the silver and the gold and the Babylonish garment, as they lay together in one heap, were his god. He hungered after them. All that was good and brave and upright in him bowed down before them. His evil thought was hastening to become an evil deed.

(3) "*I took.*"—This is the fateful step. When I stride out to respond to temptation, when I close with its offer, that is the fatal step, and for that step I must render an account to God. To that step, to that choice, my will consents. Then my responsibility begins. At last the evil thought became the evil deed. Achan shut the eyes of his soul to God and honour and duty, and reached out his hands for the spoils. He took them. He was a thief now. It was no longer a look, a thought, a wish; it was a deed. He had done the evil. He took the goodly things —the things that were not his own, but God's.

(4) "*They are hid.*"—The whole progress of his crime is singularly plain to us. The taking might have been a hasty impulse before consequences had been well weighed. Not so the hiding in the earth in the midst of the tent; then we have to deal with design and cunning. That is a deliberate adoption and defence of the evil deed. And mark how that adoption was approved, and the defence vigorously maintained, every hour during which the treasure lay hid, especially as, day by day, and hour by hour, events were happening which bore close relation to the secret of Achan's tent and heart. Had he no misgiving when he saw the increase by others of the contents of the treasury of the Lord? Had he no misgiving when Ai was to be attacked—none when the attack had failed—none when the six-and-thirty men were slain—none when it was proclaimed that an accursed thing was in the midst of Israel—none when search was being made, when his own tribe was suspect, when through family and household

the suspicion glided nearer and nearer? And when it pointed to him alone of all Israel, why did he not at once confess? why wait for the solemn adjuration of Joshua? Was it a lingering hope of escape? He did not care though the lot should fall on another to suffer innocently, did not care for shame on God's cause, did not care for future hindrance. Every stage was an opportunity to repent, but every opportunity was passed by. The confession, when it came at last, had not one fragment of voluntariness about it, it was extorted by a divinely-framed line of circumstances; there was the very highest moral pressure exerted on his evil conscience, until like an instant cold sweat there burst forth this—"Of a truth I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel, and thus have I done." He made confession soon enough to glorify God, but too late to avert God's judgment.

¶ The entire body of the remaining texts [which speak of the confession of our sins] is summed in Josh. vii. 19 and Ezra x. 11, in which, whether it be Achan, with his Babylonish garment, or the people of Israel, with their Babylonish lusts, the meaning of confession is simply what it is to every brave boy, girl, man, and woman, who knows the meaning of the word "honour" before God or man—namely, to say what they have done wrong, and to take the punishment of it (not to get it blanched over by any means), and to do it no more. "Without courage," said Sir Walter Scott, "there is no truth; and without truth there is no virtue." The sentence would have been itself more true if Sir Walter had written "candour" for "truth," for it is possible to be true in insolence, or true in cruelty. But in looking back from the ridges of the Hill Difficulty in my own past life, and in all the vision that has been given me of the wanderings in the ways of others—this, of all principles, has become to me surest—that the first virtue to be required of man is frankness of heart and lip: and I believe that every youth of sense and honour, putting himself to faithful question, would feel that he had the devil for confessor, if he had not his father or his friend.[1]

[1] Ruskin, *The Lord's Prayer and the Church*, § 13 (*Works*, xxxiv. 226).

III.

The Punishment.

And it shall be, that he that is taken with the devoted thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.—Josh. vii. 15.

1. Only one thing more remained to be done. They led forth the wretched man, with all his household, and all that belonged to them, and all Israel stoned him. And then they burned the dead body, and buried all beneath a heap of stones, alike as a memorial and as a warning. But the valley they named "the valley of Achor," or *trouble,* while the echoes of that story sounded through Israel's history to latest times, in woe and in weal, for judgment and for hope. It seems a terrible punishment; but Achan had already brought defeat and disgrace on his countrymen. He had robbed God, and brought the whole community to the brink of ruin. He had brought disaster on the nation, and shame and ruin on himself and his house. In all coming time, he must stand in the pillory of history as the man who stole the forbidden spoil of Jericho. That disgraceful deed is the only thing that will ever be known of him.

¶ Say what some may, the World *is* progressing, and part of the progress is shown in our conceptions of the true punishment of sin.[1]

¶ All true justice is vindictive to vice, as it is rewarding to virtue. Only—and herein it is distinguished from personal revenge—it is vindictive of the wrong done;—not of the wrong done *to us.* It is the national expression of deliberate anger, as of deliberate gratitude; it is not exemplary, or even corrective, but essentially retributive; it is the absolute art of measured recompense, giving honour where honour is due, and shame where shame is due, and joy where joy is due, and pain where pain is due. It is neither educational, for men are to be educated by wholesome habit, not by rewards and punishments; nor is it preventive, for it is to be executed without regard to any consequences; but only for righteousness' sake, a righteous nation does judgment and justice.[2]

[1] H. B. Garrod, *Dante, Goethe's Faust, and other Lectures,* 88.

[2] Ruskin, *Lectures on Art,* iii. § 90.

2. But if it be awful to contemplate the death, and the mode of death, of Achan, how much more when we think that his wife and his sons and his daughters were stoned to death along with him. Israel had not in these early days learned how to distinguish the guilty man from his innocent family, and the man whose covetousness had first caused the death of nearly forty of his countrymen now involved in his punishment his own children and his very cattle. No doubt the Israelites thought they had the sanction of God for these and like enormities. They thought they were appeasing His anger by stoning and burning the innocent with the guilty. They thought that He was well pleased with this monstrous offering. But that was because they did not know Him. They had only just emerged from heathenism, and had brought with them into their new life no little of the old leaven. They had been accustomed to believe that God was cruel, vindictive, delighting in bloody sacrifices and the slaughter of His enemies, and this clung to them more or less for a thousand years, in spite of all their revelations, until Christ showed them God's true face, and the old leaven was at last purged out.

¶ While holding it to be impossible for men to know the absolute truth about heavenly things, Browning yet believed that knowledge was vouchsafed to us "according to the measure of a man." Upon this view, his highest ideal, while not indeed giving a complete picture of God as He is, yet represents Him "in such conception as my mind allows."

> Here by the little mind of man reduced
> To littleness that suits his faculty.

This revelation of Him is confessedly inadequate, and therefore in a sense false; but it is nevertheless more fitting to say that God is the highest that we can conceive and more, than to say that He is not what we conceive Him to be. For man's mind is a mirror which displays His glory on a diminished scale, just as an "optic glass" draws the sun's rays together, and reveals "the very sun in little," reduced to a mere pin-point circle, yet "all the same comprising the sun's self." Pope Innocent, who more than any character seems to speak for Browning, is only expressing this thought under a slightly different form, when he asks,

Man's mind, what is it but a convex glass,
Wherein are gathered all the scattered points
Picked out of the immensity of sky,
To reunite there, be our heaven for earth,
Our known unknown, our God revealed to men?

This view that reality is partially represented in thought, is, for Browning, bound up with the further doctrine that the representation of it is continually growing more complete. "An absolute vision," he says, "is not for this world, but we are permitted a continual approximation to it." Our destiny is to "creep ever on from fancies to the fact," as

Truth successively takes shape one grade above
Its last presentment.

Man, therefore, thus conditioned must expect
He could not, what he knows now, know at first;
What he considers that he knows to-day,
Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown;
Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
Because he lives, which is to be a man.[1]

[1] A. C. Pigou, *Robert Browning as a Religious Teacher*, 20.

DEBORAH.

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DEBORAH.

The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,
Until that I Deborah arose.—Judg. v. 7.

THE history of the chosen people during the interval between the death of Joshua and the rise of Samuel—between the establishment of the Sanctuary at Shiloh on the first occupation of the country and its final overthrow by the Philistines—is specially interesting. Other portions of Scripture may be more profitable "for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness"; but for merely human interest—for the lively touches of ancient manners, for the succession of romantic incidents, for the consciousness that we are living face to face with the persons described, for the tragical pathos of events and characters—there is nothing like the history of the Judges from Othniel to Eli. It would seem, if one may venture to say so, as if the Book of Judges had been left in the sacred books with the express view of enforcing upon us the necessity, which we are sometimes anxious to evade, of recognizing the human, national, let us even add barbarian, element which plays its part in the sacred history. The Book of Judges recalls our thoughts from the ideal which we imagine of past and of sacred ages, and reminds us, by a rude shock, that even in the heart of the chosen people, even in the next generation after Joshua, there were irregularities, imperfections, excrescences, which it is the glory of the sacred historian to have recorded faithfully, and which it will be our wisdom no less faithfully to study.

1. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." This sentence, frequently and earnestly repeated, is the key-note of the whole book. It expresses the freedom, the freshness, the independence, the licence, the anarchy, the disorder of the period.

Once settled in Canaan, the Israelites could not resist the temptation to adopt the worship of the native deities, on whom the prosperity of flocks and fields was supposed to depend. The God of Israel came from the desert; in the early days of the settlement His home was believed to be in Sinai rather than in Canaan; hence the popular religion, without ceasing to regard Jehovah as the God of Israel, felt it necessary to pay homage at the same time to the gods of the country. No doubt also the popular mind tended to identify Jehovah with the local Baals and Astartes, whose sanctuaries were scattered over the land. Such confusions gravely imperilled the distinctive character of Israel's religion; they produced a degradation of faith and morals which led the prophets to charge Israel with having fallen into Baal-worship from the very day they entered into Canaan; the popular religion could only be described as a "forsaking" of Jehovah.

2. These troubled and stormy times often produced a warrior-hero to cope with them. Of these Israelite heroes many strange and warlike deeds were told, as they are told also of warrior chieftains in other lands. The compilers and editors called these men "judges," but they were not judges in our sense of the word at all; they were chieftains and heroes, whose influence was felt mainly in war and was of a local and temporary character. Such leaders were Ehud and Barak, Gideon and Jephthah; while several of the minor judges were perhaps rather heads of great families, deriving their authority from the distinction of their birth and the number of their relatives and dependents.

I.

Deborah the Judge.

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, she judged Israel at that time.—Judg. iv. 4.

1. The crowning event of this period, both in its intrinsic interest and in our knowledge of it, is the victory of Deborah and Barak. The years of "rest" which the land enjoyed under Ehud's rule came to an end with his death. The "children of Israel again did (continued to do) evil in the sight of the Lord." The

interval of comparative piety is over, and the under-current of distrust and idolatry again resumes its influence. The spiritual fidelity of Israel is an occasional thing; the apostasy is the result of a permanent tendency, often checked, but ever recovering its sway. Ehud, by the moral ascendancy he had acquired, was for the time the bulwark of his people's faith. But the presence of Sisera in "Harosheth of the Gentiles" with "nine hundred chariots of iron" overawed the Israelites; and "twenty years he mightily oppressed" them. This force powerfully affected their imagination, and rendered them all but helpless. They forgot that God is able to break the chariots in pieces, and to make all their massive strength a disadvantage and a difficulty, as when the Egyptians laboured heavily in the Red Sea sand and waves; that the spirit that animates an army is greater than weapons or fortifications. The spirit of patriotism was dead, and there was little to distinguish God's people from the people that surrounded them. The fear of Sisera and his nine hundred iron chariots shook the hearts that were once proud and free, and his military raids and exactions kept the land in constant terror.

2. "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, she judged Israel at that time"—not, it would seem, only the families near where she resided, for many from far and near sought the guidance and counsel of this woman. The report of her wisdom, of her zeal and devotion to Israel's God, had travelled north and south and east and west; she judged Israel. A prophetic woman, a seer somewhat like what Samuel was in later times, not content to give direction to the people for pay, she carried in her breast faith in Jehovah and His helping hand. The distress of the people went to her heart. It was at the same time a dishonour to Jehovah. Therefore help must be given, and deliverance must be at hand. The thought that the tribes belonged to one another, that they were Jehovah's tribes—perhaps also that they must become Jehovah's nation—lived in her. Though to a great extent dead among a multitude which was disheartened, and by this time tired of the obligation of nationality, it still certainly lived here and there in individuals. Deborah's wrath was fierce against all who slipped aside from the worship of Jehovah, and all this religious passion mingled

with her patriotic rage at the misery of her people to drive her into insurrection. She is the magnificent impersonation of the free spirit of the Jewish people and of Jewish life.

¶ On the coins of the Roman Empire, Judæa is represented as a woman seated under a palm-tree, captive and weeping. It is the contrast of that figure which will best place before us the character and call of Deborah. It is the same Judæan palm, under whose shadow she sits, but not with downcast eyes, and folded hands, and extinguished hopes; with all the fire of faith and energy, eager for the battle, confident of the victory. Strength of character, intellect, clear-sightedness, tact, and the wisdom which He alone who had called her to that lofty position could give, were the endowments of Deborah, and she bravely did her best with them for the problems and duties of that terrible time. The people must be roused to meet and conquer Sisera. It was the will of God. So she sent for the man whose duty it was to summon the fighting-men to action, Barak, the son of Abinoam, and reiterated to him the command of God, and His instructions for the arrangements of the battle.

¶ We want in England—women who will understand and feel what love of country means, and act upon it; who will lose thought of themselves and their finery and their pleasure in a passionate effort to heal the sorrow and to destroy the dishonour, dishonesty, and vice of England; to realize that as mothers, maidens, wives, and sisters, they have but to bid the men of this country to be true, brave, loving, just, honourable, and wise, and they will become so, just as they will become frivolous, base, unloving, ashamed of truth and righteousness if women are so; to be not content to live only for their own circles, but to take upon their hearts the burden of the poor, the neglected, and the sinful, for whom many now exercise a dainty, distant pity, and no more.[1]

II.

Deborah the Deliverer.

I arose a mother in Israel.—Judg. v. 7.

The account of the deliverance of Israel from the Canaanites exists in two versions, one in prose (Judg. iv.), the other in poetry (Judg. v.). The two agree in the main; the chief actors are the

[1] Stopford A. Brooke.

same—Deborah, Barak, Sisera, Jael; the Canaanites are defeated with Jehovah's powerful aid in a battle near the Kishon; Sisera is murdered by Jael in her tent. But there are some striking disagreements; in chap. iv. the oppressor is Jabin, king of Hazor, and Sisera of Harosheth is his general; Deborah is connected with Ephraim, Barak with Kedesh; two tribes only, Zebulun and Naphtali, take part in the battle: Jael murders Sisera while he lies asleep by driving a tent-peg through his temples. On the other hand, chap. v. knows nothing of Jabin; Sisera is the head of a confederacy of Canaanite kings (ver. 19), and is in fact a king; his mother has princesses for attendants (ver. 29); apparently both Deborah and Barak belong to Issachar (ver. 15); the struggle is on a much larger scale, all the tribes are summoned to arms, and for the first time Israel acts almost as a nation (vv. 13–18); Jael fells Sisera with a mallet while he is standing drinking (ver. 26 f.). The Song is obviously ancient, and may well be contemporary with the events it describes; it is not only one of the finest odes in the Hebrew language, but it possesses the highest value as a historical document.

1. After a spell of oppression, probably brought on by the expansion of the Israelite tribes in the direction of the Great Plain, the Canaanites, led by Sisera at the head of the local chiefs, made a determined effort to drive the Israelites back into their hills. To resist this formidable movement, and to put an end to an intolerable state of insecurity and humiliation, Deborah roused the tribes.

It was a great day for Israel when Deborah left the shadow of the palm-tree, where she sat as "judge," and went northward to summon Barak to the defence of his people. It shows the commanding position to which Deborah had attained, that Barak at once responded; and it is a further tribute to the remarkable personal influence of this woman that, when the matter was explained to Barak and the line of action suggested, he refused to enter upon this campaign unless they had the presence and counsel of Deborah. Perhaps he recognized that the very presence of Deborah in the army would be an inspiration to his soldiers which he himself could not supply, because he did not feel it. At all events, by his very attitude to Deborah we get the

measure of her greatness; for it means that of all souls in Israel this woman's was the most dauntless, the most resolved and noble.

¶ I would that all those who have suffered at women's hands and found them evil would loudly proclaim it, and give us their reasons; and if those reasons be well founded we shall be indeed surprised, and shall have advanced far forward in the mystery. For women are indeed the veiled sisters of all the great things we do not see. They are indeed nearest of kin to the infinite that is about us, and they alone can still smile at it with the intimate grace of the child, to whom its father inspires no fear. It is they who preserve here below the pure fragrance of our soul, like some jewel from Heaven, which none know how to use; and were they to depart, the spirit would reign in solitude in a desert. Theirs are still the Divine emotions of the first days; and the sources of their being lie, deeper far than ours, in all that was illimitable.[1]

Ochone! to be a woman, only sighing on the shore—
With a soul that finds a passion for each long breaker's roar,
With a heart that beats as restless as all the winds that blow—
Thrust a cloth between her fingers, and tell her she must sew;
Must join in empty chatter, and calculate with straws—
For the weighing of our neighbour—for the sake of social laws.
O chatter, chatter, chatter, when to speak is misery,
When silence lies around your heart—and night is on the sea.
So tired of little fashions that are root of all our strife,
Of all the petty passions that upset the calm of life.
The law of God upon the land shines steady for all time;
The laws confused that man has made, have reason not nor rhyme.

O bird that fights the heavens, and is blown beyond the shore,
Would you leave your flight and danger for a cage to fight no more?
No more the cold of winter, or the hunger of the snow,
Nor the winds that blow you backward from the path you wish to go?

[1] M. Maeterlinck, *The Treasure of the Humble*, 92.

Would you leave your world of passion for a home that knows no riot?
Would I change my vagrant longings for a heart more full of quiet?
No!—for all its dangers, there is joy in danger too:
On, bird, and fight your tempests, and this nomad heart with you![1]

2. Six of the tribes, those immediately north and south of the plain, responded to the summons; the remoter clans, Dan and Asher in the north, Reuben and Gilead (Gad) on the east of Jordan, refused to stir themselves. Judah is not mentioned: it was cut off from Ephraim and the rest by a line of Canaanite strongholds; Simeon and Levi, who are also passed over, seem to have been unable to maintain a distinct existence after the early stages of the invasion. The Israelites assembled on the heights of Tabor. The Canaanites, who had received tidings of the movement, mustered in vast numbers in the plain of Esdraelon, at its foot. Thirteen miles away from Tabor, on a spur of the hills, at the south-west corner of the plain, was Taanach, the outlying fortress of the Canaanites; and to this place their host, with all its war-chariots, came; and Deborah, watching from the lofty rock, cried out: "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." So Barak, with his ten thousand men, all on foot, went out to meet his enemy. While he marched over these thirteen miles, the Canaanites advanced from Taanach to their second fortress of Megiddo, where near at hand a network of streams, merging into four, fell down among the olives to join the Kishon that flowed in the plain below. There at the waters of Megiddo the battle joined on the level ground. It was at this critical moment that (as we learn directly from Josephus, and indirectly from the song of Deborah), a tremendous storm of sleet and hail gathered from the east, and burst over the plain, driving full in the faces of the advancing Canaanites. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." As in like case in the battle of Cressy, the slingers and the archers were disabled by the rain, the swordsmen were crippled by the biting cold. The Israelites, on the other hand, having the storm on their rear, were less troubled by it, and derived confidence from the consciousness of this Providential aid.

[1] Dora Sigerson Shorter, *Collected Poems*, 249.

The confusion became great. The "rain descended," the four rivulets of Megiddo were swelled into powerful streams, the torrent of the Kishon rose into a flood, the plain became a morass. The chariots stuck fast in the sodden ground, and the charioteers were slain. The horse-hoofs hammered the soil in flight. The mighty ones who rode the chariots now strove in vain to flee the terror of battle. Half of them struggled downwards to the river through the marshy ground. But the Kishon was now in furious flood, and this part of the Canaanite army was engulfed in its clashing torrent. The rest fled along by Endor, to the east, and perished there.

¶ A remarkable parallel to what happened here was the battle of Crimesus in Sicily when the Carthaginians were defeated by the Greeks. The Greek encampment, like that of Israel, was on the hill above the river. The chariots of their opponents are broken by the Greek Infantry. The violent storm of wind, rain, hail, thunder and lightning, beating in the faces of the Carthaginians but only on the backs of the Greeks; the confusion in the river becoming every moment fuller and more turbid through the violent rain, so that numbers perished in the torrents; the total rout of the enemy and the capture of the chariots, the spoils of ornamented shields—are the exact counterpart of the victory of Deborah and Barak over Sisera.[1]

3. Sisera abandoned his chariot and ran for his life. He managed to get to "the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite." Though not herself an Israelite, she belonged to a tribe which had long been associated with the fortunes of Israel. Her husband was a descendant of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. But though friendly with Israel and worshipping the God of Israel, the Kenites were at the same time at peace with the Canaanites. "There was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite" (Judg. iv. 17). The explanation has been found in the situation in which these people were placed. Hazor was only a few miles from Kedesh, so that it was policy to be at peace with Jabin, seeing they had no power to resist him, though it does not follow that they would not have risen against him if they could. Sisera, therefore, had no hesitation in seeking refuge in the tent of Jael, and had no suspicion of treachery when Jael went out to meet him, and offer him hospitality.

[1] T. E. Miller, *Portraits of Women of the Bible*, 82.

There are, as has already been stated, two distinct accounts of what Jael actually did. When we compare chap. iv. 21 with chap. v. 26, 27, we observe that, according to the prose narrative, Jael waited till Sisera was in a deep sleep, and then murdered him as Macbeth murdered Duncan. And this certainly appears to be a cold-blooded deed of cruelty. But in Deborah's poem a different version is given. Jael offered him milk and butter, and while he was drinking she attacked him with the tent-pin and a workman's hammer, so that "he bowed down and fell at her feet, and where he fell he died."

No sooner was the deed done than Barak came by, hot in pursuit, and saw with joy his foe lie dead. The same day Deborah met him, and the prophetess changed into the poet. Like a Norse scald, she sang the rising, the battle, and the death of the enemy; and uttered words of scorn and mockery rarely equalled in the literature of war.

¶ Sisera, for all his commanding nine hundred iron chariots, was slain with one iron nail.[1]

III.

Deborah the Poet.

Then sang Deborah.—Judg. v. 1.

1. There can be little doubt that the splendid ode found in the fifth chapter of Judges belongs to the same date as the events which it describes. The passions roused by the battle have not cooled down; the sense of a common danger, the enthusiasm of united action, the exultation in Jehovah's triumphant aid, are felt with a vividness which only a contemporary could have put into words. The religious temper and the political situation agree with what we know of the period of the Judges from elsewhere, while the antique poetic language may well be characteristic of the same date. The ode, then, is a most ancient composition, probably earlier than anything else of the same extent in the Old Testament; its original place may have been in some collection of old Hebrew songs, such as the Book of Jashar or the Book of the Wars of the Lord. A text so ancient must inevitably have

[1] Thomas Fuller, *Pisgah Sight of Palestine.*

suffered in the course of ages; and though the general sense is clear, in many places we cannot follow the connexion of thought or interpret particular words. But we have no difficulty in understanding it sufficiently to be able to appreciate its great lyric and dramatic qualities—its impetuous rapidity, its vivid and picturesque suggestiveness, the brevity and compression, yet completeness, with which it develops its theme. Apart from its literary distinction, it has a high historical value from the light it incidentally throws on the social condition of Israel at the time of its composition. As regards its authorship there seems to be no conclusive reason for rejecting the very ancient tradition according to which it was composed by Deborah, even though we should fail to detect the peculiarly feminine traits that have been seen by some in the allusions to Jael, Sisera's mother, and the like. In its mechanical structure the main feature to be observed is the parallelism which it shows in common with all Hebrew poetry, and more particularly the progressive parallelism which is seen in such clauses as:

> From heaven fought the stars;
> From their courses fought [they] with Sisera;

or:

> Through the window she looked forth and cried;
> The mother of Sisera through the lattice.

2. It is pre-eminently a battle-song of triumph. Barak and Deborah are twice addressed in it, but the poem was composed, not to glorify them but to celebrate the triumph over the enemy. It is, however, because of its association with the "judge" Barak that it is put into the Book of Judges. The prose story of chap. iv. is evidently regarded by the Deuteronomic editor as the more important for his purpose. Yet it is almost certain that the poem contains the truer account. Prose traditions were always liable to additions and alterations in the mouths of the people, while it was more difficult to alter poetry without disturbing the rhythm of the whole. In the main, it is more patriotic than moral, more warlike than religious, and thus unquestionably reflects the temper of the time. In it we see the lyric poetry of war and patriotism brought to perfection. Its treatment of the theme from so many standpoints and with reference to so many national interests is

itself a mark of long experience in literary composition. The song is, in fact, a literary consummation, like the poems of Homer. And, although in the mouth of a woman, it breathes the very spirit of those that delight in war.

¶ It is necessary to say once more, because it is one of the key-notes of his character, that all his life long F. W. Robertson was a soldier at heart. Again and again he expresses his conviction that, in a military life, the highest self-sacrifice he was capable of could alone have been accomplished. Those who have heard him speak of battle—battle not as an incident of mere war, but as the realization of death for a noble cause—will remember how his lips quivered, and his eyes flashed, and his voice trembled with restrained emotion. Unconsciously to himself, the ring of his words, the choice of his expressions, his action even in common circumstances, his view of the Universe and of Humanity, were influenced and coloured by the ideal he had formed of a soldier's life, by the passionate longing of his youth to enter it, and by the bitterness of the regret with which he surrendered it.[1]

3. The song falls naturally into three divisions: vv. 2–11, an introduction; vv. 12–22, a description of the battle; vv. 23–31, the sequel.

(1) In the first part God is celebrated as the Helper of Israel from of old and from afar; He is the spring of the movement in which the singer rejoices, and in His praise the strophes culminate. Jehovah is invoked and praised as the God of the Hebrews alone. He seems to have no interest in the Canaanites, or compassion towards them. Yet the grandeur of the Divine forth-going is declared in bold and striking imagery, and the high resolves of men are clearly traced to the Spirit of the Almighty. Duty to God is linked with duty to country, and it is at least suggested that Israel without Jehovah is nothing and has no right to a place among the peoples. The nation exists for the glory of its Heavenly King, to make known His power and His righteous acts. The enemies of Israel are the enemies of Jehovah, and they who fight for the national cause fight for God.

(2) The second part of the song tells of the battle, and there never was a grander description of a battle, witnessed, as it were, from the parapet of heaven. In Taanach by the waters of

[1] S. A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 41.

Megiddo are the marshalled kings. But the very stars in their courses are marshalled against them. And see, almost at once, there is the ancient river Kishon sweeping them away—"O my soul, march on with strength!" And the fierce battle-horses are pawing the ground—there is the thud and the thunder, the confusion and the conflict—and the victory is secured. Through this wonderful song we are able to see with our own eyes and to follow the events of that memorable day.

(3) After the vivid description of the battle come the cursing of Meroz and the blessing of Jael. The courageous devotion of Jael is set effectively against the unpatriotic selfishness of Meroz. In considering this section we should remember that the song of Deborah is no more than the passionate, poetic utterance of a patriot who belongs to the wild, uncivilized and unchristian period in which it was composed, and all that it says about God, and about the fight and the slaughter of Sisera, is to be judged in accordance with the morality and theology of the time in which it was written. The Jehovah of the Hebrews, at this period in their history, was very much like the gods of other nations just emerged from the savage state. He was their own God, the God who defended their country from the gods of other nations, the existence of whom the Hebrews did not deny. Nothing could be dearer to Him than that the Israelites should mercilessly slay those who worshipped other gods who disputed His pre-eminence. In judging Meroz for its lack of patriotic spirit, Deborah identifies the cause of Israel with the cause of Israel's God. To be disloyal to the nation implied religious treason. The Canaanites were Jehovah's enemies, and the highest goodness was to destroy them. Yet Meroz sat still and allowed her brethren to do all the bloody fighting, when it was in her power utterly to block the escaping foe and thus to exterminate this enemy of God's people.

4. So overmastering is this religious feeling that Jael's breach of hospitality, because committed in the interests of Jehovah, is extolled as an act of heroism. We may imagine how Deborah could cry with full belief in the justice of her cry: "Blessed above women be Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite." There are, however, three things to be taken into account if we are to understand the situation aright.

(1) A Hebrew woman of undaunted courage but of fierce spirit, in the first flush of victory chanting her triumphant war-song, feeling that twenty years of cruel suffering and oppression had now been signally revenged, seeing the oppressor himself laid low and her nation once more free, may be forgiven if at the moment she thought less of the mode and instrument by which that freedom had been won than of the great result achieved—may be *almost* forgiven, or at least understood, if, in the disturbed balance of her mind, the true measure of things failed to impress itself upon her conscience, and the end might seem to justify the means.

(2) But Deborah was here expressing not so much her own as the nation's thankfulness for deliverance; the nation would naturally warmly express its gratitude, without entering with any minute criticism into the question of the morality of the act whereby that deliverance had been effected; and it was only reasonable and right that Jael's name should be handed down to posterity as that of one who shared the glory of having helped in bringing about a great national blessing.

(3) Deborah's ode of triumph rises to its loftiest level at its close—"So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." It is not our cause but Thine, it is not our vengeance that Jael has wreaked, but the vengeance of Jehovah upon an oppressor and a savage—"But let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." It is a strange thing that so fierce a battle-chant should settle down into such a sweet swan-song as this at the end. It is a strange thing that in the same soul there should throb the delight in battle, the almost delight in murder, and these lofty thoughts. But let us learn the lesson that true love to God means hearty hatred of God's enemy. We need not then deduct anything from our admiration of the great woman, prophetess and patriot, because she deals the meed of praise to the doughty deed of Jael. It is only necessary to realize the whole situation, and then we can follow with a heartfelt approval, making due allowance for the different moral atmosphere of the time, her quick transition from the cursed Meroz who came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty, to the blessed Jael, the woman who did.

¶ I loved Frederick Maurice, as every one did who came near him; and have no doubt that he did all that was in him to do of

good in his day. I only went once to a Bible-lesson of his; and the meeting was significant, and conclusive. The subject of lesson, Jael's slaying of Sisera. Concerning which, Maurice, taking an enlightened modern view of what was fit and not, discoursed in passionate indignation; and warned his class, in the most positive and solemn manner, that such dreadful deeds could only have been done in cold blood in the Dark Biblical ages; and that no religious and patriotic Englishwoman ought ever to think of imitating Jael by nailing a Russian's or Prussian's skull to the ground,—especially after giving him butter in a lordly dish. At the close of the instruction, through which I sat silent, I ventured to enquire, why then had Deborah the prophetess declared of Jael, "Blessed above women shall the wife of Heber the Kenite be"? On which Maurice, with startled and flashing eyes, burst into partly scornful, partly alarmed, denunciation of Deborah the prophetess, as a mere blazing Amazon; and of her Song as a merely rhythmic storm of battle-rage, no more to be listened to with edification or faith than the Norman's sword-song at the battle of Hastings. Whereupon there remained nothing for *me*,—to whom the Song of Deborah was as sacred as the Magnificat,—but total collapse in sorrow and astonishment; the eyes of all the class being also bent on me in amazed reprobation of my benighted views, and unchristian sentiments. And I got away how I could, but never went back.[1]

¶ The opening verse of Deborah's Song gives us the whole secret of the national inspiration in a tribute of glory to Jahweh: "For that the leaders took the lead in Israel, for that the people offered themselves willingly, praise ye Jahweh!" In the end of the Song which thus grandly opens, we are repelled by the savage exultation of a woman over the treacherous murder of a defeated foe. And rightly; for Christ has given us the right to judge. But do we pay as much attention to the virtues which are manifest in the Song? Nowhere do we find a more scathing exposure of those who prefer the material ambitions of life, however legitimate, to the call of national need in the name of the religious ideal; and nowhere is self-sacrifice more finely celebrated. "Zebulun was a people that jeoparded their lives to the death, and Naphtali on the high places of the field." Whatever views we have of war—and we are those who themselves owe their religious liberty to the virtues of the battle-field — let us remember what war did for Israel. "By war," says Jahweh elsewhere, "I took you"; and we may extend the meaning of these words beyond the mere fact that so He helped them to

[1] Ruskin, *Præterita*, iii. chap. i. (*Works*, xxxv. 486).

freedom, to the moral assurance that by the call to fight He redeemed them from selfishness, from servitude to material aims, from schism and disloyalty to Himself. The battle-field was the Golgotha of early Israel. It was there that Zebulun and Naphtali laid down their lives for the brethren; and there that the Spirit of Christ which was in Israel from the beginning won its earliest triumphs.[1]

¶ The Biblical way of conveying truth is not to be likened to the erection of a building; it is the gradual unfolding of a tree. The acorn becomes a plant, the plant becomes a sapling, and the sapling, in turn, becomes the full-grown oak, until, by the process of inward expansion, the tree becomes what the house built of stone could never be, a living, fruit-bearing, and organic unity. This is the story of religion as set forth in the Biblical records. It began as a tiny rill away up in the Semitic highlands. It increased in volume and depth as it sped through the Mosaic age and entered the period of the monarchy. It was fed by priesthood and prophecy, psalm and proverb, discipline and deliverance, until, in the fulness of the times, it flowed a mighty river and poured its waters into the sea of the New Testament Gospel.[2]

[1] G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, 153.
[2] John Adams, *Israel's Ideal* 2.

GIDEON.

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GIDEON.

The Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian: have not I sent thee?—Judg. vi. 14.

1. THE writer of the Book of Judges has preserved scarcely any information regarding the life of Gideon, except that which belongs to one very brief period of it—the period of a few days during which he gathered an army, attacked the Midianites, and drove them out of the land. And the story is told in an extremely complicated narrative. Two main documents can be traced, but these have been so interwoven, both before and after the Deuteronomic redaction of Judges, that the analysis in detail must be regarded more as a critical experiment than as possessing any degree of certainty.

2. Gideon was evidently a man of great influence in Central Palestine. His own personal character is more clearly delineated than that of any other hero except Samson, whose life is of quite another character. Above even his simple straightforwardness and his courage stands his religious nature. He receives from Jehovah's angel the call to deliver his tribe. One of his earliest deeds is the destruction of the altar of Baal, after he has erected one to Jehovah. Four traditions are recorded as to his intercourse with Jehovah and desire to know His will (vi. 36 ff., vii. 2 f., 4 ff., 9 ff.); and when he had crushed the Midianites he devoted his share of the spoil to making an ephod by which Jehovah might be consulted. The traditions here, as in other cases, were doubtless collected from different quarters. Some of them were told of Jerubbaal, so that the collector in vii. 1 feels it necessary to explain in one of those which he is using that Jerubbaal is Gideon. There are two distinct sets of traditions in chapters vii. and viii., the one telling how he led the Hebrews against the Midianites under Oreb and Zeeb, how he conquered them and

saved his people; the other (viii. 4 ff.) telling how he and the men of his family (Abiezer) pursued Zebah and Zalmunna to exact blood-revenge, because they had killed his brothers. Although in the story of viii. 22 f. Gideon is said to have declined to rule over his people, it is evident from the story of Abimelech that he had exercised a recognized authority, of such a character that his family might be expected to continue it after him.

I.

The Call of Gideon.

There would seem to have been two calls addressed to Gideon; or, if not, there are two accounts of the one call. In any case the narratives must be treated separately.

i. The First Call.

The Book of Judges is one continuous exhibition of God's providential prevention of the destruction of true religion. Whenever the Hebrew conquerors amid their Canaanite vassals had become supine, when their relation to Jehovah had grown slack, and their religious enthusiasm feeble, when selfishness, comfort, and luxury were their supreme ends in life, they in their turn became weak, the Philistines and their other enemies fell upon them, made forays into their land, seized parts of it, until by misery they were compelled to return to their loyalty and to their God, Jehovah.

1. In the defeat of Sisera the last attempt of the old inhabitants of the land of Canaan to recover their sway was put down. The next event is wholly different. It is the invasion of the tribes of the adjoining desert. The whole of Southern Palestine lay at the mercy of the Midianites—hordes of barbarians who lived by pillage and rapine. The unity of Israel was broken, and its unhappy people were a helpless prey in the clutches of their fierce and merciless tormentors. The one thing the children of Israel were so slow to see was that their unity as a people depended on the purity of their faith. As soon as they began to be taken in the toils of idolatries, some lost their soul to Baal,

some to Ashtaroth, and some to Melech; and in the very multiplicity of these base types of worship the unity of the nation was lost. Israel was "greatly impoverished"; they made dens in the mountains, and caves and strongholds, leaving the fertile vales to the marauding hosts of the desert.

2. In the midst of the distress of Israel a cry went up to the Lord from some of them; and the Lord answered by an unnamed prophet, whose mission was to remind them that they had been long in idolatry, in disobedience, and in disregard of the Lord's commands. But to Israel's cry there was another answer. When repentance was well begun and the tribes turned from the heathen rites which separated them from each other and from Divine thoughts, freedom again became possible, and God raised up a liberator. And just as in the other invasions and oppressions, so here, the deliverer is sought in the locality nearest to the chief scene of the invasion. Overhanging the plain of Esdraelon, where the vast army of the Midianites was encamped, were the hills of Western Manasseh. It was from a small family of this proud tribe that the champion of Israel unexpectedly arose — Gideon, son of Joash of the tribe of Manasseh, who resided at Ophrah, in Gilead beyond Jordan, the most heroic of all the characters of this period.

3. It was whilst Gideon was brooding over the wrongs of his family and of his country that the call came upon him. The scene was long preserved, and the manner of the call carries us back to the visions of the patriarchal age. Gideon had succeeded in getting together a quantity of wheat, which was to be food for himself and his family. Having saved it from the raids of the Midianites, and kept it from the searching eye of the robber, he brought his grain to the winepress that he might thresh it ready for use. He was in this act when the angel of Jehovah appeared to him. Gideon's position and occupation brought out most significantly the low and unhappy condition into which Israel had fallen. He was threshing wheat, not in the usual place and manner—but "by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." Poverty and subjection are here. His family, as we learn from his own lips, is the poorest in Manasseh, and he himself is the

least in his father's house. The times can never have looked darker or drearier to any human eyes than to the youngest son of Joash the Abiezrite, working in fear and poverty, while the shadow of a cruel and seemingly invincible oppression rested on his unhappy land. Yet to this soul with darkened faith, heir to national despair and family misfortune, came the great vision of God and duty—the only vision that can lift any soul above such circumstances as these, and set it in the broad highway of hope and service. "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour," said the messenger of God. Gideon's reply proves how sore his spirit was. Whether the messenger was an angelic visitor or a human prophet matters little: in any case, he represented God to Gideon's mind. And yet he took up the authentic word, and doubted it. "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? The Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." After the manner of men, this seems to be a very sensible reply. He could not see God in the affliction. He was unable to recognize the Almighty in the poverty and suffering through which they were passing. Great and valiant and mighty as Gideon was, he was but a man.

4. Gideon was not going to accept a mere religious phrase in place of a Divine fact: He had too profound a conviction of God's power to believe He could be present without interfering to suppress unrighteousness. He desired a sign; but his wish was a note of habitual caution, not of disbelief. He would do anything that God commanded him, but he absolutely refused to act for himself. He would be sure that the Lord was with him at every turn. This is not cowardice; it is that true discretion which is the better part of valour—to attempt nothing without the Lord. The sign was granted. For, when he laid his prepared kid and unleavened cakes upon the rock, the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed them. This circumstance betokened, not rejection of the gift, but its acceptance in a higher sense; the present becomes a sacrifice. Gideon no longer hesitated or questioned. He rejoiced in the merciful visitation; accepted its message; closed with its call; and worshipped the Lord, who had

so graciously come to him: "Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom"—"the Lord sent peace." The altar, with its title, testified to the faith and gratitude and gladness of this man, called to the service of the Lord. It was his significant acceptance of that high service, and his solemn pledge to go through with it, depending on his Mighty Master, and confident of a happy issue by His all-sufficient help.

¶ Don't allow your heart to hold or to utter such a thought as that you do not trust God. Though you feel weak in faith, don't give way to distrust, don't permit it in yourself. How often is that call given as a needful one, "Be of good courage," "Be strong"! Hold fast the beginning of your confidence without wavering; for He is faithful that hath promised. You know that He is worthy of being trusted, that His love may be trusted safely, that there is no safety but in trusting in Him. You know all this,—and you know that now, in this life of trial, He is trying our faith. After having shown us what He is to us, what His heart is toward us, in the gift of Jesus, He will prove our faith and strengthen it by sorrow and suffering. In Jesus He has shown us the way to glory, the only way; and what is that way? Sorrow, and grief, and death, suffered in the spirit of confidence.[1]

¶ He by whom God is known, perceiving how He governs all things, confides in Him as his guardian and protector, and casts himself entirely upon His faithfulness—perceiving Him to be the source of every blessing, if he is in any strait or feels any want, he instantly recurs to His protection and trusts to His aid—persuaded that He is good and merciful, he reclines upon Him with sure confidence, and doubts not that, in the Divine clemency, a remedy will be provided for his every time of need—acknowledging Him as his Father and his Lord, he considers himself bound to have respect to His authority in all things, to reverence His majesty, aim at the advancement of His glory, and obey His commands—regarding Him as a just judge, armed with severity to punish crimes, he keeps the judgment-seat always in his view.[2]

ii. The Second Call.

There now follows what seems to be a second version of the call of Gideon and the building of the altar. Jehovah calls Gideon first of all to destroy the altar of Baal which belongs to his father and the sacred post (*asherah*) that stands beside it; to

[1] *Letters of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen*, i. 283.

[2] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 129.

build on a designated spot an altar of Jehovah, and offer upon it a certain bullock as a dedicatory sacrifice. He does so by night. When the sacrilege is discovered and its perpetrator detected, the townspeople demand that he be put to death. His father Joash persuades them to leave it to Baal to avenge the outrage done him: "If he be a god, let him plead for himself." The oracular words of Joash, who as the custodian of the holy place was naturally the priest of Baal, explain the name Jerubbaal.

There may be difficulties in the details of this narrative, but it faithfully exhibits the twofold call to Gideon which forms the framework of the rest of his history. The first call is the mission —almost of a prophetic character—to strike a decisive blow at the growing tendency to Phœnician worship in the central tribes of Palestine. He was sent, first and foremost, to recover a lost ideal. Israel had lowered to the level of the rest of the surrounding nations. Her people had broken down the barriers, intermarried, abandoned what was distinctive in her own religious life, borrowed the ritual of idolatry from this tribe and the other, and so stood discrowned and dethroned, her power lost, her glory diminished and destroyed. The second call is that by which in later times Gideon has been chiefly known—the war of insurrection against Midian.

1. Gideon began his work at once where it is hardest—among his own people and in his father's house. His father had an altar to Baal: it must have meant for Gideon a more painful struggle of conscience to initiate the work of reform so near home. The Midianites were a cruel foe, but Baal and the Asherim were deadlier and more cruel foes. The Midianites inflicted physical woes, but idolatry struck at the soul of the nation. Gideon's sword was drawn first against the spirit of idolatry. At no time in his career was the strength and independence (or, rather, God-dependence) of his character revealed as at this moment. It was an unpopular deed he was told to perform; one that demanded the noblest kind of heroism, and the probable result of which would be alienation from his friends. He knew the risks and took them. The word of the Lord was in his soul: "Peace be unto thee, fear not." It was either death for him or life for the Kingdom of God.

Once for the least of children of Manasses
God had a message and a deed to do,
Wherefore the welcome that all speech surpasses
Called him and hailed him greater than he knew;

Asked him no more, but followed him and found him,
Filled him with valour, slung him with a sword,
Bade him go on until the tribes around him
Mingled his name with naming of the Lord.[1]

2. Having first, then, cast out the beam from the eye of the nation itself, Gideon was free to deal straightly with evils outside its own life. This was the second part of his work, and the preface to this second chapter was a new vision, which marked a further stage in the progress of his own religious insight. But Gideon began to be nervous again. Beheld from afar the battle seems grand and exciting; but when it is imminent, when the enemy is right in view, and the raw, undisciplined material needs to be ordered and arrayed, the stoutest heart will quail, the boldest and strongest faith will have its shrinkings and fears. Is it to be wondered at that, with the thousands of Israel's chivalry waiting for his word, ready to fight but for the most part men "who before knew nothing thereof," Gideon, also an untried soldier and ignorant of methods of warfare, invested suddenly with a tremendous responsibility, should pause, should retire from the noise and glare of the host, and pour out his heart before the God whose call he had obeyed? He had yet to arm his own inward faith for victory. He would venture to ask God for proofs of His helpfulness. Gideon asked God once more to confirm his call by a simple sign. He put a fleece on the middle of an open threshing-floor, and in the morning it was quite wet, while the soil all around was dry. The next night the miracle was reversed, the soil being wet all round and the fleece perfectly dry. Then Gideon at last is at the disposal of God.

Gideon's action here again arose, not from cowardice, but from his innate aversion to taking risks. It shows an absolute distrust of his own personality, an abandoning of all confidence in anything within himself. He was a thoughtful man, who had difficulties other men had not. But now, having again been granted

[1] F. W. H. Myers, *Saint Paul.*

a sign, his mind was made up. He believed he had been called of God to fight his country's battles. We never again read of a sign asked. He knows whom he is trusting. Henceforth he is—

One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break;
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

II.

Gideon's Campaign.

i. The Battle of Jezreel.

The career of Gideon is more than a battle: it is a campaign of war, which divides itself into three parts.

1. The first is the battle of Jezreel. The Midianite encampment was on the northern side of the valley, between Gilboa and Little Hermon. Gideon and his 32,000 Israelites encamped on the slope of Mount Gilboa, by the spring of Jezreel, called, from the incident of this time, "the Spring of Trembling." Thirty-two thousand men seems scarcely sufficient to put into the field to risk the chances of battle with a successful, arrogant, and overwhelming enemy. Yet what is the first message that reaches him from God, as he lies encamped before the Midianites? "The people that are with thee are too many." God saw how much untrustworthy material existed in this army. He thought that with such an army the Israelites might pride themselves on their own strength and claim as their own the victory which He had promised.

2. Two devices were used to weed it of its elements of weakness, to reject from it all whom God counted unfit to fight His battles.

(1) The first was the usual and wise proclamation, issued as soon as they came in sight of the enemy, that whosoever was faint-hearted should leave the ranks and quit the field, that their fear might not create a panic as soon as the battle began. No

fewer than two-thirds of the whole army took advantage of this proclamation. Twenty-two thousand melted away, over hill and valley, to their homes and their business; and only ten thousand remained who had "a heart for any fate."

"There remained ten thousand!" The leader's heart may well have misgiven him as he looked upon these ten thousand men, and then turned his eyes northward to the hill of Moreh, and to the intervening valley, swarming with the vast hosts of the enemy. But his faith is to be still further tried. There must be a further weeding out from these sorely-diminished ranks, for "the people are yet too many." The ten thousand who remained were all brave men. But more than courage was required in a battle such as Gideon had to fight.

(2) The victory was to be a victory of faith. The battle was to be won against overwhelming numbers. The Lord needed men who would be firm as a bow of steel in His hand. He needed men in whom spirit should be dominant, who could hold the flesh in habitual and iron control. So He supplied the second device for further reducing the numbers, and the test of their fitness was very curious. Gideon brought the people down to the stream of water, and the Lord said to him, "Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand."

¶ Due South across the head of the Vale is the rugged end of Gilboa—Jezreel standing off it—and on this Gideon, like Saul, drew up his men. The only wells are three, all lying in the Vale: one by Jezreel itself, one out upon the plain, and one close under the steep banks of Gilboa. The deep bed and soft banks of this stream constitute a formidable ditch in front of the position on Gilboa, and render it possible for the defenders of the latter to hold the spring at their feet in face of an enemy on the plain: and the spring is indispensable to them, for neither to the left, right, nor rear is there any other living water. Anybody who has looked across the scene can appreciate the suitability of the test which Gideon imposed on his men. The stream, which

makes it possible for the occupiers of the hill to hold also the well against an enemy on the plain, forbids them to be careless in their use of the water; for they drink in face of that enemy, and the reeds and shrubs which mark its course afford ample cover for hostile ambushes. Those Israelites, therefore, who bowed themselves down on their knees, drinking headlong, did not appreciate their position or the foe; whereas those who merely crouched, lapping up the water with one hand, while they held their weapons in the other and kept their face to the enemy, were aware of their danger, and had hearts ready against all surprise. The test in fact was a test of attitude, which, after all, both in physical and moral warfare, has proved of greater value than strength or skill—attitude towards the foe and appreciation of his presence.[1]

¶ I never understood these two verses till I went to Aneityum. In this country we never lap water like a dog; and when we put our hand to our mouth, we make a cup of the palm of our hand, and drink as if it were out of a small cup, in no way resembling the lapping of a dog; but these men lapped not with their tongue like a dog, but putting their hand to their mouth. However, shortly after I went to Aneityum I saw what appeared to me to give a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. I was standing one day by the side of a stream where it was crossed by a path; a native came hurrying along, but he stopped to drink; he did not, however, bow down upon his knees as most people do among us, who wish to drink heartily, nor did he lift the water to his mouth with his hand formed cup-like as we do; but he stooped till his head was within eighteen inches or so of the water; then he began to throw up the water into his mouth with his hand as fast as a dog could lap; and he looked, as near as might be, like a dog lapping. I said at once to myself, That is the way Gideon's soldiers lapped. I had an opportunity scores of times afterwards of seeing the natives drink in the same way; and I observed that, as a general rule, it was the strong, the vigorous, and the energetic who drank water in this way; never the feeble, the lazy, or the easy-going; and the inference that I drew respecting God's intentions towards Gideon and his army was this: the Lord wished to select the very best men in that army, and with them to accomplish the deliverance of Israel.[2]

3. So Gideon was left with the three hundred men who waited for the night. But he needed heartening before he would be

[1] G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 397.
[2] J. Inglis, *Bible Illustrations from the New Hebrides*, 36.

ready to do his best. Knowing his distrustful disposition, Jehovah bade him, if he feared to embark upon so great a venture without further encouragement, take an attendant and go down and listen to the conversation of the host. Says Bishop Hall, "He that hath might enough to deliver Israel, yet hath not might enough to keepe himselfe from doubting. The strongest faith will ever have some touch of infidelitie." Gideon and his servant, under cover of darkness, crept near enough the Midianite camp to hear the dream of a cake of barley-bread smiting a tent. In waking hours, the tent would have remained intact, and the cake would have been shivered; but the dream transformed the result. There are probable omissions in the narrative, which would have accounted for this nervous tension on the part of so great an invading host; for evidently the name of Gideon had already awakened their fear. "This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon," said the affrighted interpreter. And the dream took its place beside the fleece of wool in the education of the deliverer.

Assured therefore of success he immediately returned, and prepared for the engagement. His three hundred men he divided into three companies, and put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. So he marched, in the midst of the night, to the outside of the camp. The midnight watch had just been changed when Gideon's trumpet shrilled, with three hundred others, on the silent air; and the flash of his lamp, to the noise of the shattered pitchers, with three hundred others, gleamed across the waking camp; mad confusion took hold of captain and common soldier; Midianite and Amalekite, perhaps not too trustful of each other in clear daylight, now followed stark suspicion; and the valley of dreamy silence became the threshing-floor of shrieking Death. Every one drew his sword against every other, and the host fled headlong down the descent to the Jordan.

¶ The motto of these disappearing men was this: "It can't be done." They must have organized themselves into a society to perpetuate their own idea. If so the society has shown great vitality. Many of its members abide with us until this day. No, probably they did not organize. They did not have enough gumption to. And such a sentiment grows like a weed without any cultivation. I recall a certain town in Ohio where I had gone

to talk about an enlargement and revitalizing of the Young Men's Christian Association. Thousands of young men in the place needed just such help as that organization is supposed to provide. I outlined the plan to a clergyman. He said it was a good plan, there was great need the thing should be done; "but," he said, with an air of settling the thing, "it can't be done in *this town*." Among others I talked with a business man. He listened attentively, approved the plans, agreed upon the great need, and then, settling back in his chair with the same air of finality, used exactly the same words, with the same emphasis, "It can't be done in this town." I got the same reply from several men that day. And I said to myself, "They are right; it can't be done with them, but it can be done without them." And it was.[1]

Who ordered Gideon forth
To storm the invader's camp,
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp?
The trumpets made his coming known,
And all the host was overthrown.

Oh! I have seen the day
When with a single word,
God helping me to say,
"My trust is in the Lord,"
My soul hath quelled a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose.

But unbelief, self-will,
Self-righteousness and pride,
How often do they steal
My weapon from my side!
Yet David's lord and Gideon's friend
Will help His servant to the end.

ii. The Ephraimites.

1. But Gideon's work is but half done. The Midianites are only scattered; they must be exterminated. Their aim was to cross the river at the fords of Beth-barah. It was immediately under the mountains of Ephraim, and to the Ephraimites accordingly messengers were sent to interrupt the passage. The great tribe, roused at last, was not slow to move. By the time that

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 244.

they reached the river, the two greater chiefs had already crossed, and the encounter took place with the two lesser chiefs, Oreb and Zeeb, who were both captured and slain.

2. In the pride of their success, the Ephraimites quarrelled with Gideon for not having called in their assistance earlier. But Gideon appeased their jealousy by a shrewd speech: "Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" Their remonstrance at not having before been called to take part in the struggle is as characteristic of the growing pride of Ephraim as his answer is of that calm forbearance which places him at the summit of the heroes of this age. The gleaning of Ephraim in the bloody heads of those chieftains, he told them, was better than the full vintage of slaughter in the unknown multitudes by the little family of Abiezer. There was sufficient justice in this remark to appease the anger of Ephraim. Gideon's three hundred men could not have done much towards the slaughter of the Midianites, though he could claim the credit of having dispersed them. The opportune seizing of the fords by Ephraim had been the means of securing the persons of two of the leaders of the Midianitish hordes.

¶ You may almost be sure that a man is wise if you find that he has a cool spirit. When you see a person who cautiously avoids the ground where strife is apt to be excited, and builds his house on a spot where contention is impossible, you instinctively respect him, for you know it betokens wisdom; but when you see a man always getting involved in quarrels, always showing his teeth, you rightly conclude that he is a fool. "A fool uttereth all his anger: but a wise man keepeth it back and stilleth it." If we are naturally irritable or splenetic, wisdom will incline us to avoid occasions which excite us, and to keep a watchful guard over our spirits where the occasions are inevitable. If we neglect such precautions we shall justly be counted fools, and the consequent outbreaks of passion will lead us into fresh exhibitions of folly, and more completely justify the harsh judgment which has been passed upon us.[1]

¶ "A soft answer turns away wrath; but a *trying* word arouses anger." A scholar thus translates the Hebrew. Now, many words that are not wrathful, not malicious, not exactly offensive, are nevertheless trying. They are pin-pricks that are

[1] R. F. Horton, *The Book of Proverbs*, 205.

difficult to define, but often hard to bear. Such a tongue resembles one of those trees known as monkey-puzzles, which lacerate whoever may incautiously come in contact with them. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life." Another growth this! We recently read of a tree on which dozens of different fruits had been grafted; so a restrained, healing, sanctified tongue is a tree of paradise on which blooms every heavenly grace. Men are ambitious to possess an eloquent tongue; but a wholesome tongue is far more than a golden mouth. What a great work lies in this direction, the hallowing of my lips, the sanctification of my words: that every utterance may be true, enlightening, kindly, inspiring![1]

iii. The Final Rout.

1. We now come to the third part of Gideon's campaign. The flight of the enemy has left the three hundred masters of the field. Will they not now take time to stoop and drink? No, not yet. "And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing." We see Gideon, after having sent messengers to Ephraim, himself crossing Jordan, and following such as had managed to escape this way, making for the camp where the Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna were. Against these he was urged by the sacred duty of blood-revenge, for they had, on some occasion of which we are not told, killed his brothers at Tabor.

Succoth and Penuel, the two scenes of Jacob's early life, on the track of his entrance from the East, as of the Midianites' return towards it, were Gideon's two halting-places. These two towns, when Gideon passed them with his troops, now spent with hunger and weariness, refused to give them even a little bread; and not only so, but when Gideon reminded them that he was engaged in no private enterprise, but that he was pursuing the host of Midian, the townsmen laughed at him, and asked him if Zebah and Zalmunna were already in his hands, that they should reward him with bread for his army. Gideon vowed that when he returned from the pursuit he would teach the men of Succoth, and slay the men of Penuel, and he kept his vow.

At Karkor, far in the desert, beyond the usual range of the nomadic tribes, he fell upon the Arabian host. The Midianites were entirely defeated, and their two leaders, Zebah and Zalmunna,

[1] W. L. Watkinson.

taken. The two kings of Midian, in all the state of royal Arabs, were brought before the conqueror on their richly caparisoned dromedaries. They replied with all the spirit of Arab chiefs to Gideon, who for a moment almost gives way to his gentler feelings at the sight of such fallen grandeur. But the remembrance of his brothers' blood on Mount Tabor steels his heart; and when his boy, Jether, shrinks from the task of slaughter, he takes their lives with his own hand, and gathers up the vast spoils.

¶ These two marauding chiefs of the Midianites, "Oreb and Zeeb," come before us in the history of the Judge Gideon. They were truly dwellers in the wilds, and came up with their numerous bands to prey upon the harvests and stores of the defenceless Israelite. Such forays have been often made in modern times by the wild tribes of North American Indians, but the natives of the extreme North are at present inoffensive. It may be worth while to notice how well the names of the Midian chiefs would befit a modern Indian brave. Translated, they are "the Raven" and "the Wolf." The reference is to the feasts provided for birds and beasts of prey by these plundering chieftains, who almost exhibited the same spirit as those greedy animals. Many a modern Indian has a similar appellation. "The Crow" or "the Fox," and other such names, borrowed from animals, are frequent among present Indian chiefs. Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings or leaders of Midian, had similarly significant names. These may be rendered "Slaughter" and "Wandering Shade." So a recent Indian chief in the Saskatchewan plain was called "Wandering Spirit," an idea very similar to that of Zalmunna, both implying the consignment to the shades of death of the victims of their fury. It may be noted also that it is now generally the custom to translate into English the native Indian names, both for the preservation of their significance and for avoiding the uncouth syllables of a barbarous tongue. It might be well if the Hebrew names, which are all significant and appropriate to the occasion of their occurrence, were also translated for a like reason.[1]

2. We read that afterwards the land had rest for forty years; and it is most instructive to note that the Midianites, as enemies, are never mentioned again in Scripture. It was the unfaltering persistence of Gideon and his men that secured permanent peace.

¶ Peace may be sought in two ways. One way is as Gideon sought it, when he built his altar in Ophrah, naming it, "God send

[1] *An Apostle of the North: Memoirs of Bishop W. C. Bompas*, 355.

peace," yet sought this peace that he loved, as he was ordered to seek it, and the peace was sent, in God's way:—"the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon." And the other way of seeking peace is as Menahem sought it, when he gave the King of Assyria a thousand talents of silver, that "his hand might be with him." That is, you may either win your peace, or buy it:—win it, by resistance to evil;—buy it, by compromise with evil.[1]

III.

Latter Days.

1. Triumphant, and bearing splendid trophies of his triumph, Gideon recrossed the Jordan. Whether he was the object of a great popular enthusiasm, and in what manner any such enthusiasm was expressed, we are not informed. But one thing is mentioned, and in it we see the reflection of the national sentiment. He was asked to accept the position of ruler. The word "king" is not used; but the reality signified by the word is formally and solemnly offered. And not for himself only, but for his family also. For the first time in Israel's history the idea of a hereditary dynastic government is articulated. These men were so dazzled by the splendour of human achievements that they ignored the Divine influence which was the source of them. Gideon's campaign was especially designed to avoid the danger of the people attributing to men what was really the work of God. Yet they regarded Gideon as the sole hero, and forgot to glorify God.

2. To his great honour, the patriotic virtue of Gideon was not moved by this great temptation. He was mindful of what they had forgotten; and to the invitation, "Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also," his prompt answer, in the true spirit of the theocracy, was, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you." Considering that the love of power is one of the strongest passions in man, and that Gideon was the father of a large family of promising sons, whose advancement might seem a reasonable object of paternal solicitude, this refusal, solely on principle, to

[1] Ruskin, *Two Paths*, § 195 (*Works*, xvi. 410).

become the first monarch of the Hebrew state deserves to be ranked with the most illustrious examples of patriotic self-denial that history has recorded. Gideon's conduct here displays not only disinterestedness but faith of a high order. That his faith was not perfect is only another way of saying that he, like every one else, was not free from the weaknesses incident to humanity.

¶ If you demand disinterestedness in the sense of gratifying no principle of one's nature, your quest is hopeless; it can't be found. A missionary is disinterested, though he is gratifying love. So was an Italian, who led a man into mortal sin, and then stabbed him, that he might straightway go to eternal damnation. Disinterested! he sacrificed himself for hate. The truth is, that disinterestedness, as it is called, is in itself neither good nor bad. Its quality depends on its motive, and on whether it terminates or not on self. The devil is as disinterested as Gabriel; but the one is prompted by hate, and the other by love to God.[1]

3. Gideon declined the kingship, but he did not retire to his farm like the Roman Cincinnatus. He did not continue to judge Israel under a palm tree, like Deborah. On the contrary, there are tokens, in the brief notice of his latter days, of a state and importance bordering on the regal, and tokens, it must be added, of a tendency to overstep the bounds of rule in the fear of God, and of that moral deterioration which too often follows great prosperity. The rich spoils of war became his; he made an ephod of the golden ornaments—"which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house."

4. Gideon's devotion to God appears to have been sincere and earnest. He desired to offer Him the choicest of the spoil. But, like many other good men, he appears to have been unable to worship Him except in a visible form, with the usual, in fact the universal, result—the gradual but certain deterioration of the moral and spiritual instincts of those who so worship Him. The making of the ephod was a pious work. Let us believe that it was the interpretation of a genuinely pious feeling. The connexion of the statement of the desire for the ear-rings with the refusal of the hereditary rule on the ground that Jehovah was the only Ruler over Israel, suggests that, in this desire, Gideon had

[1] A. A. Hodge, in *Princetoniana*, 207.

regard to Jehovah's glory. He may have thought that, by devoting the spoil to a religious purpose, he was teaching the people that their homage was due to the Unseen King, that by Him the victory had been gained, and to Him its fruits should be dedicated.

But, whatever may have been Gideon's motives, the result of his action was deplorable. He made Israel to sin. Sin was the cause of all the evil that Gideon in his bravery had all his life been battling with; but, instead of going himself, and taking all his Ironsides and all his people up with him to God's house against sin, Gideon set up a sham house of God of his own, and a sham service of God of his own, with the result to himself and to Israel which the sacred writer puts in such plain words. Think of Gideon, of all men in Israel, leading all Israel a-whoring away from God!

¶ Though an idol is "nothing in the world" (1 Cor. viii. 4), there is nothing in the world more real than idolatry. Putting something else in God's place, making a God of something else than God—that is a very real transaction.[1]

5. It is evident that in Gideon we have reached the climax of the period. We feel "all the goodness" of Gideon. There is a sweetness and nobleness blended with his courage, such as lifts us into a higher region; something of the past greatness of Joshua, something of the future grace of David. But he was, as we should say, before his age. He remains as a character apart, faintly understood by others, imperfectly fulfilling his own ideas, staggering under a burden to which he was not equal. There was much primitive grossness in his conception of religion, of war, and of government. Nevertheless the central, sovereign, animating power in the man's soul was an absolute conviction that, whatever came, he would do the will of the one true righteous God of heaven and of earth. That made his career glorious; for in so doing he was faithful to the highest light he had access to.

Be faithful unto death. Christ proffers thee
Crown of a life that draws immortal breath:
To thee He saith, yea, and He saith to me,
"Be faithful unto death."

[1] R. W. Barbour, *Thoughts*, 64.

To every living soul that same He saith,
"Be faithful":—whatsoever else we be,
Let us be faithful, challenging His faith.

Tho' trouble storm around us like the sea,
Tho' hell surge up to scare us and to scathe,
Tho' heaven and earth betake themselves to flee,
"Be faithful unto death."[1]

Christina G. Rossetti, *Verses*, 115.

JEPHTHAH AND HIS DAUGHTER.

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JEPHTHAH AND HIS DAUGHTER.

Jephthah . . . waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens.—Heb. xi. 32, 34.

THE story of Jephthah belongs to a semi-barbaric period of history, when spiritual ideas were greatly confused. In the times before the prophets rose in Israel, bringing with them a magnificent system of theocratic government, we are specifically told that there was no open vision in the land, and that each man did what was right in his own eyes. There was no firm highway of general sanction; men toiled along a narrow uncharted path, and won every onward step with difficulty. Jephthah lived in such a time. His ideas of God and of religious truth were no doubt barbaric. The merest child in the Kingdom of God who has heard the voice that spake in Galilee, knew more than he. Yet it will be seen that Jephthah did know some truths of duty and religion which are among the very noblest, and may be counted cardinal. There is more than a historic value in his story; there is a moral value. The main interest of the story clearly lies, not in his personal history or defeat of the Ammonites, but in his vow and its fulfilment, and in the origin of an Israelite custom. A tragic interest gathers about the rough and ruthless warrior but tender-hearted father, who purchased victory at a price more terrible than he anticipated.

I.

JEPHTHAH.

Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them.—Judg. xi. 11.

1. Jephthah had an infamous origin. He was the son of one who is spoken of as Gilead, and whom we may suppose to have

been the prince or leading man of the country, and therefore by name identified with it. His mother was a "stranger," or "another woman," an Aramæan harlot; and this child of shame was cast out by those born in wedlock. His irregular birth in the half-civilized tribes beyond the Jordan is the key-note to his life.

2. Driven from home, he betook himself to a wild, marauding life on the borders of the tribe, where he became a sort of robber chieftain, the head of a band of freebooters, "levying imposts on weak Ammonites, plundering caravans, and surprising villages, as did the Arabs of those and later days," and the Scottish Border chiefs three centuries ago. By this sort of border-chieftain life Jephthah became expert in the tactics of warfare, and in the art of leading and governing men. He was prompt in an emergency, bold in generalship, astute in policy. He was a born organizer, and out of the broken men, the thieves and outlaws that gathered to his standard, he made such an army of soldiers that one at once thinks of Cromwell and his irresistible Ironsides.

¶ "Your troops," Cromwell said to Hampden, "are most of them decayed old serving men, and tapsters, and such kind of fellows; do you think that such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen that have honour and courage and resolution in them?" And so, knowing that the quality of the unit was the quality of the aggregate, Cromwell insisted that every man should submit to discipline, and be sober, and live in the fear of God; for he that feareth God need know no other fear. And it was with great pride that he wrote, "My troops increase. I have a lovely company. You would respect them did you know them."[1]

3. Meanwhile the great crisis of Jephthah's life had come. The Israelites were in sore straits from the children of Ammon. There was a great national emergency which needed an intrepid hero, and the thoughts of men turned instinctively to Jephthah. The elders of Gilead begged him to be their leader; and, after expressing surprise that such a request should be made to him, Jephthah agreed, on condition that he should become their chief when the Ammonites were defeated. A solemn compact was

[1] Samuel Horton.

accordingly made, and Jephthah was appointed leader by popular acclamation. He knew himself equal to the task; but, once committed, he was filled with a profoundly religious sense of the importance and responsibility of the enterprise, and of his dependence for its successful achievement upon the favour and assistance of Heaven. In no spirit of vain confidence or self-reliance, but with a deep conviction of his personal insufficiency, apart from Divine help and guidance—in the spirit of one alert to the call of duty, and strong in the heroism of faith—did he undertake the campaign. This is the moment when, in the eyes of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he loomed so grandly as to be worthy of a place in the sacred roll of fame. Jephthah was at first called by the people to his office and work; but God ratified the choice by giving to him His Spirit in an extraordinary manner.

It was for this earnestness in his ascertained mission, it was because in execution of it "he waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens," that God accepted Jephthah. His rash and unhallowed vow, the no less rash and unhallowed performance of it which issued in the death of his daughter, his haughty and remorseless temper, were doubtless offensive in God's sight. But for these he found pardon, because, like St. Paul, he sinned in ignorance. In the chief trial of his life he found acceptance, because he displayed faithful obedience.

¶ Of all the men who fought against the Union, General Jackson possessed the most extraordinary characteristics. With him the cause of the South was a religion. Every act of his life was undertaken with prayer; he was a Confederate Puritan. Had the cause of the Confederacy been just and right, it might have had a dozen Stonewall Jacksons.

And the result? The world remembers that so long as Jackson lived the Confederacy seemed invincible. "Who may pretend to explain the incongruity of man?" remarks the historian Rhodes, in his final comment on General Jackson. "Both the conscientious Jackson and Barère, the man without a conscience, believed in waging war like barbarians. During the wars of the Revolution the Frenchman proposed to the Convention that no English or Hanoverian prisoners be taken. 'I always thought,' declared Jackson, that 'we ought to meet the Federal invaders on the outer verge of just right and defence, and raise at once the black flag, viz., "No quarter to the violators of our homes and firesides." It would, in the end, have proved true humanity and mercy.

The Bible is full of such wars, and it is the only policy that would bring the North to its senses.'"[1]

4. At this moment, it would seem, when Jephthah was at Mizpah of Gilead, he went to the holy place or altar, and there, "before Jehovah," registered a vow to sacrifice whomsoever should be the first to meet him when he returned victorious. That he had a human victim in his mind is clear from the language which he used. We must consider the vow separately and carefully, but let us continue the history at present.

In his dealing with the Ammonites Jephthah appears as a man of courage and dash, and an eager champion of Jehovah, whom he regarded apparently as only the national God of Israel, as Chemosh was the divinity of his enemies. He attempted expostulation with the Ammonites before taking up the sword. The latter asserted that the Israelites, when they came up from Egypt, had taken away their land from Arnon to Jabbok. Jephthah reminded them (1) that neither Moab nor Ammon had allowed Israel even to pass their borders when they were marching on Palestine; (2) that the territory in question had been taken, not from Ammon, but from Sihon, king of the Amorites; (3) that no complaint had been raised for three hundred years against the Israelite occupation. The conclusion was that Ammon ought to be content with what Chemosh their god had given them, and if they were not, then "Jehovah be judge this day."

The Ammonites remained obdurate to these historical arguments, and Jephthah boldly led his army southwards to attack them on their own ground. No details of that bloody war are given; we are told merely that he smote the enemy from Aroer, close to Jordan, to Minnith, sacking twenty cities, and sweeping the region as far as a place which cannot now be identified, but was then called Abel-Cheramim—the meadow of the vineyards—"with a very great slaughter." The triumph was complete; "the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel."

5. Jephthah returned in triumph to his home at Mizpah. The first person who came to meet him was his only daughter,

[1] F. N. Thorpe, *The History of North America*, 312.

accompanied by a chorus of women. The overwhelming grief of the father, the noble self-surrender of the daughter, and her courageous resignation to her fate, are told with admirable skill and reserve. "He did to her what he had vowed to do." It became henceforth a custom in Israel to celebrate the tragedy of Jephthah's daughter by four days' mourning every year.

¶ In all poetry—all at least that I have seen—nothing comes up to that. "She was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter." The inspired writer leaves the fact just as it stands, and is content. Inspiration itself can do nothing to make it more touching than it is in its own bare nakedness. There is no thought in Jephthah of recantation, nor in the maiden of revolt, but nevertheless he has his own sorrow. He is brought very low. God does not rebuke him for his grief. He knows well enough the nature which He took upon Himself. He does not anywhere, therefore, forbid that we should even break our hearts over those we love and lose. . . . He elected Jephthah to the agony he endured while she was away on the hills! That is God's election, an election to the cross and to the cry, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani." "Yes," you will say, "but He elected him to the victory over Ammon." Doubtless He did; but what cared Jephthah for his victory over Ammon when she came to meet him, or indeed for the rest of his life? What is a victory, what are triumphal arches and the praise of all creation, to a lonely man?[1]

Since our country, our God,—oh, my sire!
Demand that thy daughter expire;
Since thy triumph was bought by thy vow—
Strike the bosom that's bared for thee now!

And the voice of my mourning is o'er,
And the mountains behold me no more;
If the hand that I love lay me low!
There cannot be pain in the blow!

And of this, oh, my father! be sure—
That the blood of thy child is as pure
As the blessing I beg ere it flow,
And the last thought that soothes me below.

Though the virgins of Salem lament,
Be the judge and the hero unbent!
I have won the great battle for thee,
And my father and country are free!

[1] Mark Rutherford, *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane.*

When this blood of thy giving hath gush'd,
When the voice that thou lovest is hush'd,
Let my memory still be thy pride,
And forget not I smiled as I died![1]

II.

Jephthah's Daughter.

And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed.—Judg. xi. 39.

As is frequently the case, the chief interest and instructiveness of Jephthah's career gather round that event in his life which to himself and his contemporaries might seem to mar its symmetry and destroy its usefulness. It is the great blunder of his life, his unfortunate vow, that unceasingly draws back men's attention to him. He knew enough of war to understand that this undertaking he had entered into against the Ammonites would either make or mar him. It was the golden opportunity that comes once in a man's life. Through all his nature he was moved in prospect of the approaching battle. It made him thoughtful, concentrated, grave. He felt more than usually thrown back upon God's help; he wished to feel sure of God, and so, according to his light, vowed a vow.

¶ Was it right of Jephthah to make a vow? We know he was wrong in the terms of it, but was he wrong in making any vow in the circumstances? It is open to any one to say that he had a merely heathen idea of God, as a Being to be bribed, to be secured by gifts and promises. It was very common with heathen generals to record such a vow before engaging; and it is common still to see men who wish to acknowledge God in some way, but do not know how to do it. They wish to be religious, think it a good and right thing, but neither knowing nor loving God, they are pitiably awkward in their demonstrations of religious feeling. But as we have no distinct evidence regarding Jephthah's state of mind in making this vow, it is the part of charity to believe that though he was incomprehensibly rash in the terms of his vow, yet he was justified in vowing to make some offering to God should He deliver the Ammonites into his hand.[2]

[1] Byron, *Hebrew Melodies.* [2] Marcus Dods.

1. Jephthah vowed that if victory attended his campaign he would sacrifice to God the first of his household that should meet him. And it was his own beautiful daughter who met him, and then his vow hung heavily on his soul, and robbed him of all the joy of conquest. But, right or wrong, Jephthah was a man of his word. And while we shudder at the awful sacrifice, we cannot but admire the grim determination of this half-wild, barbaric chieftain, as he holds to the terms of his terrible vow, and at the expense of rendering himself childless, proceeds to fulfil it.

¶ Jephthah, although the Spirit had come upon him, made a foolish and superstitious vow, that after he gained the victory he would sacrifice his own daughter. If there had been a godly and reasonable man present, he could have made him sensible of the folly of this vow, and have said, "Jephthah, thou shalt not slay thy daughter on account of thy foolish vow; for the law concerning vows must be interpreted according to justice and fitness, not according to the letter."[1]

¶ In 1869 a farmer who lived near Eye, in Suffolk, after reaping five acres of wheat, stacked it, and vowed that it should not be threshed as long as wheat was under forty shillings a coomb—a coomb being four bushels. And for thirty-four years he kept his word, preferring to break God's law rather than his own rash vow. For thirty-four years those stacks of grain stood up, unused, refusing to make obeisance, an affront to God, who gave them for man's food, and a proclamation to every passer-by of their owner's pride and obstinacy.

That farmer died six weeks ago, and one or two days afterwards his executors sold what little was left of the wheat amongst the bundles of decayed straw, for twenty shillings the coomb. Some of the man's acquaintance made two wreaths—corruptible crowns indeed!—out of the remnant that was saved, and laid them on his grave. Doubtless, like the man himself, they said, "He died game!" but God said unto him, "Thou fool!"[2]

> Take ye no vow in jest; but still be strong
> To keep your vow; yet be ye not perverse—
> As Jephthah once, blindly to execute a rash resolve.
> Better a man should say, I have done wrong,
> Than keeping an ill vow, he should do worse.[3]

[1] Luther, *Table-Talk* (ed. by Förstemann), i. 293.
[2] *The Morning Watch*, 1903, p. 53.
[3] Dante, *Paradiso*, v. 64 (trans. by Paget Toynbee).

2. The fatal vow at the battle of Aroer belongs naturally to the spasmodic efforts of the age; like the vows of Samson or Saul in the Jewish Church of this period, or of Clovis or Bruno in the Middle Ages. But its literal execution could hardly have taken place had it been undertaken by any one more under moral restraints, even of that lawless age, than the freebooter Jephthah, or in any other part of the Holy Land than that separated by the Jordan valley from the more regular institutions of the country. Moab and Ammon, the neighbouring tribes to Jephthah's native country, were the parts of Palestine where human sacrifice lingered longest. It was the first thought of Balak in the extremity of his terror (Mic. vi. 7); it was the last expedient of Balak's successor in the war with Jehoshaphat (2 Kings iii. 27). Melech, to whom even before they entered Palestine the Israelites had offered human sacrifices (Ezek. xx. 26), and who is always spoken of as the deity thus honoured, was especially the God of Ammon. It is but natural that a desperate soldier like Jephthah, breathing the same atmosphere, physical and social, should make the same vow, and, having made it, adhere to it. There was no high priest or prophet at hand to rebuke him. They were far away in the hostile tribe of Ephraim. He did what was right in his own eyes, and as such the transaction is described.

But the narrative itself trembles with the mixed feeling of the action. The description of Jephthah's wild character prepares us for some dark catastrophe. Admiration for his heroism and that of his daughter struggles for mastery in the historian with indignation at the dreadful deed. He is overwhelmed by the natural grief of a father. "Oh! oh! my daughter, thou hast crushed me, thou hast crushed me!" She rises at once to the grandeur of her situation as the instrument whereby the victory had been won. If the fatal word had escaped his lips, she was content to die, "forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon." It is one of the points of sacred history where the likeness of classical times mingles with the Hebrew devotion. It recalls to us the story of Idomeneus and his son, of Agamemnon and Iphigenia. And still more closely do we draw near, as our attention is fixed on the Jewish maiden, to a yet more pathetic scene. Her grief is the exact

anticipation of the lament of Antigone, sharpened by the peculiar horror of the Hebrew women at a childless death—descending with no bridal festivity, with no nuptial torches, to the dark chambers of the grave. Into the mountains of Gilead she retires for two months —plunging deeper and deeper into the gorges of the mountains, to bewail her lot, with the maidens who had come out with her to greet the returning conqueror. Then comes the awful end, from which the sacred writer, as it were, averts his eyes. "He did with her according to his vow." In her the house of Jephthah became extinct. But for years afterwards, even to the verge of the monarchy, the dark deed was commemorated. Four days in every year the maidens of Israel went up into the mountains of Gilead — and here the Hebrew language lends itself to the ambiguous feeling of the narrative itself—"to praise," or "to lament" the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

¶ The following little story of Carlyle, which we find in a pamphlet by John Swinton descriptive of a recent brief visit to Europe, will disclose to many readers of that rugged and vehement essayist an almost unsuspected trait of gentleness in his character. It is a very touching picture of Carlyle in his lonely old age which it presents. Mr. Swinton found the grave of Mrs. Carlyle in the ruined church at Haddington, and on the stone is cut Carlyle's tribute to her, in which, after referring to her long years of helpful companionship, he says that by her death "the light of his life is gone out." Mr. Swinton continues—"And Mr. Carlyle," said the sexton, "comes here from London now and then to see this grave. He is a gaunt, shaggy, weird kind of old man, looking very old the last time he was here." "He is eighty-six now," said I. "Ay," he repeated, "eighty-six, and comes here to this grave all the way from London." And I told him that Carlyle was a great man, the greatest man of the age in books, and that his name was known all over the world; but the sexton thought there were other great men lying near at hand, though I told him their fame did not reach beyond the graveyard, and brought him back to talk of Carlyle. "Mr. Carlyle himself," said the gravedigger softly, "is to be brought here to be buried with his wife. Ay, he comes here lonesome and alone," continued the gravedigger, "when he visits his wife's grave. His niece keeps him company to the gate, but he leaves her there, and she stays there for him. The last time he was here I got a sight of him, and he bowed down under his white hairs, and he took his way up by that ruined wall of the old cathedral, and round there and in here by the gateway,

and he tottered up here to this spot." Softly spake the grave-digger, and paused. Softer still, in the broad dialect of the Lothians, he proceeded—"And he stood here awhile in the grass, and then he kneeled down and stayed on his knees at the grave; then he bent over and I saw him kiss the ground—ay, he kissed it again and again, and he kept kneeling, and it was a long time before he rose and tottered out of the cathedral, and wandered through the graveyard to the gate, where his niece was waiting for him."[1]

3. Nothing could reveal to us more significantly than the story of Jephthah the imperfect notions of the Divine Being entertained by the men of those times. He was a Being who could be bargained with and bribed; a Being who could be propitiated by blood, even human blood. It was a more than half-heathen idea of God that Jephthah possessed. And yet Jephthah, groping through the maze of a semi-barbaric theology, laid his hand upon this sure clue of truth: that God demanded sacrifice from those whom He loved; and the greater God's love, the greater His demand upon us.

¶ Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux, in her autobiography, tells of her strong desire to become a Carmelite at the age of fifteen. Her father had already parted with two daughters who had the same vocation, and she dreaded to ask him to make another sacrifice. "In the afternoon when Vespers were over, I found the opportunity I wanted. My Father was sitting in the garden, his hands clasped, admiring the wonders of nature. The rays of the setting sun gilded the tops of the tall trees, and the birds chanted their evening prayer. His beautiful face wore a heavenly expression—I could feel that his soul was full of peace. Without a word, I sat down by his side, my eyes already wet with tears. He looked at me with indescribable tenderness, and, pressing me to his heart, said: 'What is it, little Queen? Tell me everything.' Then, in order to hide his own emotion, he rose and walked slowly up and down, still holding me close to him. Through my tears I spoke of the Carmel and of my great wish to enter soon. He, too, wept, but did not say a word to turn me from my vocation; he only told me that I was very young to make such a grave decision, and as I insisted, and fully explained my reasons, my noble and generous Father was soon convinced."

Her father took her to the Vicar-General. "As he took us to the door the Vicar-General remarked that such a thing had

[1] Mrs. A. Ireland, *Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 323.

never been seen—a father as anxious to give his child to God as the child was to offer herself."[1]

4. The sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, taking it at its worst, was not a human sacrifice in the gross sense of the word—not a slaughter of an unwilling victim, as when the Gaul and the Greek were buried alive in the Roman Forum; it was the willing offering of a devoted heart, to free, as she supposed, her father and her country from a terrible obligation. It was indeed, as Josephus says, an act in itself hateful to God. But, nevertheless, it contained just that one redeeming feature of pure obedience and love which is the distinguishing mark of all true sacrifice, and which communicates to the whole story the elements of tenderness and nobleness.

¶ The words of the preacher rekindled the fires of love half-smothered in the heart of Lull. He now made up his mind once and forever. He sold all his property, which was considerable, gave the money to the poor, and reserved only a scanty allowance for his wife and children. This was the vow of his consecration in his own words: "To Thee, Lord God, do I now offer myself and my wife and my children and all that I possess; and since I approach Thee humbly with this gift and sacrifice, may it please Thee to condescend to accept all what I give and offer up for Thee, that I and my wife and my children may be Thy humble slaves." It was a covenant of complete surrender, and the repeated reference to his wife and children shows that Raymund Lull's wandering passions had found rest at last. It was a family covenant, and by this token we know that Lull had forever said farewell to his former companions and his life of sin.[2]

¶ In Tennyson's *Dream of Fair Women*, that splendid pageant of the illustrious women of history, the most lovely picture of all is Jephthah's daughter. Upon her breast the poet still sees the mark of the spear-wound, upon her face the gaze of tragic sorrow. Yet, when he would commiserate her, she refuses the proffered pity: she needs no pity.

> So stood I, when that flow
> Of music left the lips of her that died
> To save her father's vow;

[1] *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, 79.
[2] S. M. Zwemer, *Raymund Lull*, 42.

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure; as when she went along
From Mizpeh's tower'd gate with welcome light,
With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth: "Heaven heads the count of crimes
With that wild oath." She render'd answer high:
"Not so, nor once alone; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

"My God, my land, my father—these did move
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,
Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of love
Down to a silent grave.

"When the next moon was roll'd into the sky,
Strength came to me that equall'd my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!

"It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,
That I subdued me to my father's will;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

"Moreover it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minneth." Here her face
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She look'd her lips: she left me where I stood:
"Glory to God," she sang, and past afar,
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning-star.[1]

[1] Tennyson, *A Dream of Fair Women.*

SAMSON.

I.

The Glory of Strength.

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The Glory of Strength.

The child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.—Judg. xiii. 5.

Samson's tragic story has been treated in three ways.

(1) Some commentators on the Book of Judges have treated it as an excellent piece of Hebrew folklore. They have collected out of all the ancient books of the world wonderful tales of giants, and heroes, and demigods, with their astonishing feats of strength in war, in love, in jealousy, and in revenge—feats more or less like the feats of strength and of revenge we have in Samson.

¶ No one with a modicum of the critical faculty can read the bizarre story of Samson without recognizing that it is unique in the Bible record. It stands out as a heterogeneous patch—and a decidedly coarse one—in the sober, prosaic history to which it has been very imperfectly assimilated. It may come somewhat as a shock to some readers to be told that the Hebrews, like every other people, had a childhood which they outgrew, a period in their early history when they delighted in stories of adventure, abounding in exploits of superhuman prowess, from which even a coarse comic element was not excluded. That some traces of such early folk-tales should have survived and been preserved in the literature of the Israelites is only what might be expected; and if one of them became so closely interwoven in the texture of one of their books that it could not afterwards be disentangled and discarded, this need not surely give offence or pain to any pious reader who recognizes how fully the human element abounds in the Sacred History, especially in its earlier chapters.[1]

¶ Samson's extraordinary strength, which he displays in a number of feats, led even in olden times to a comparison of him with Hercules, and recently such comparisons have gone the length of vain attempts to count up exactly twelve exploits of Samson. After it came to be recognized or believed that the Hercules legend is a solar myth, many in our own century proceeded to take the story of Samson also as a sun-myth, and to interpret it

[1] A. Smythe Palmer, *The Samson Saga*, viii.

so in detail. The derivation of the name tells indeed rather against than in favour of this view, for it is not the way with a nature-myth to borrow or even to derive the name of its hero from the cosmical object which it describes. The derivation from *Beth-shemesh* is a much more natural one. But such mythical explanations are not capable of being refuted in detail, because the elements with which they operate are so simple that any one so disposed may find them in any history, and for the most part in opposite ways.[1]

(2) Some evangelical preachers, again, have gone to the opposite extreme, and have displayed Samson to us solely as a type and pattern of Jesus Christ. They have selected texts out of Samson's extraordinary history, and they have suspended excellent New Testament sermons on these adapted texts, hanging great weights on small wires.

¶ It is easy to allegorize the whole life of Samson—easy, for example, to find in his falling in love with a selfish and faithless Philistine woman a type of our Lord's loving the Church, alien as she was, and unloving and apt to betray Him; in Samson's slaying the lion that met him on his way to his bride at Timnath, and finding honey in the carcase when he returned, you may, if you please, see a picture of Christ fighting His way to His bride through many dangers, and of His bringing meat and refreshment out of the most roaring and formidable and ravenous of His foes, even death itself. In the thirty Philistines vaunting their solution of Samson's riddle after they had coaxed and threatened it out of his bride, you may think you see a very apt and significant and not too sarcastic representation of the men of science and philosophers of the present day who vaunt their knowledge of all the mysteries of nature, human and Divine, while they forget that this their enlightenment is at bottom due to the discovery Christ has made to His Church of the deepest problems of existence; that they could never have made these discoveries any more than the Greeks and Romans but for the impulse which Christianity has given to all knowledge, and for the actual disclosures made by Christ on earth for the sake of His Church.[2]

(3) The former is the mythical way of dealing with Samson's history; the latter is the mystical way. But there is a third way.

[1] K. Budde, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, iv. 380.
[2] Marcus Dods, *Israel's Iron Age*, 119.

And the third way is the way that St. Paul takes, not only with Samson, but with all the patriarchs and judges and kings and great men of Old Testament times. We have this Apostle's way with all those Old Testament men and women set before us again and again in his own conclusive words: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The story of Samson is a parable of the way in which the noblest opportunities of birth and the largest endowment of personal power may be prostituted, and how, accordingly, a life which begins with the fairest prospects may end in the deepest gloom. The age in which the life of Samson was lived was one of the darkest and least civilized in the history of Israel. Lawlessness and confusion were so great that only the establishment of David's monarchy saved the state from destruction and the religion of Moses from oblivion. In particular, the moral life of the Hebrews had sadly deteriorated. Multitudes had gone after the gods of the Philistines and those impure Phœnician deities whose worship was an infamy, whose service was open sin. The whole nation was corrupted by these associations and, as might be expected, fell a prey to their heathen neighbours. For forty years the Hebrews were subject to the Philistines. The spectacle presented is that of utter weakness—weakness as a nation, weakness as a religion, weakness as a people, and as individuals.

The story of Samson's life partakes of the rough and unmoral character of the times. There is much about him that appeals to the imagination, especially to the youthful imagination. We have all wondered at the feats of physical strength stated to have been performed by him—how he slew the lion; carried away the city gates during the night; slew a thousand of the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass; and how, greatest in the moment of death, he brought the heathen temple in ruins upon himself and his enemies. But though his physical strength was unparalleled, he was so deficient in the essential qualities of a leader that he failed to find any following, and he ended by betraying his trust.

¶ There was every expectation that one called of God, as Samson had been before his birth, and sanctified from the womb, endowed with just those gifts of faith, courage, and physical strength out of which heroes are made, would become an effective instrument for the work of God. And yet he failed, as many another has failed, partly because he persuaded himself that restraint in one direction allowed licence in others; partly because he trusted to the outward sign of his consecration to carry him through. He had faith and audacity, great confidence in his gifts, and a supreme contempt for the enemy; and he supposed that these might take the place of that restraint of the body which his strong nature specially needed. So he roamed free in fancy, imagination, and mind. He allowed the other passions to centre and gather force.[1]

¶ In his picture of Samson, that strange Hebrew Hercules, whose character and life are altogether unlike the other heroes of sacred story, Watts has depicted a type of man such as the Hebrew tradition probably commemorates and had as its original Samson Agonistes. We think of him as light of heart, and full of sportive mirth, but Watts paints him in his picture in serious thoughtful mood, with a far-away look in his eyes that yet seem to see nothing, feeling how far short he has come of his great consecration; how the Spirit's power has been to him a gift endowing him at times with supernatural strength, but not a sanctifying grace always abiding in him and transforming his nature. And perhaps this was a more common mood with him, though he does not give way to it, than the joyousness which overflowed in mirthful tricks and plays upon words which is associated with him. His story, if we rightly consider it, was pathetic and tragic in the highest degree.[2]

¶ In one of his lesser known poems, Whittier represents the wife of Manoah as thus describing to her husband a vision she had had of her baby son's "future dark":—

> Before me, in a vision, rose
> The hosts of Israel's scornful foes,—
> Rank over rank, helm, shield, and spear,
> Glittered in noon's hot atmosphere.
>
> I heard their boast, and bitter word,
> Their mockery of the Hebrew's Lord,
> I saw their hands his ark assail,
> Their feet profane his holy veil.

[1] G. H. S. Walpole, *Personality and Power*, 146.
[2] H. Macmillan, *The Life-Work of G. F. Watts*, 160.

No angel down the blue space spoke,
No thunder from the still sky broke;
But in their midst, in power and awe,
Like God's waked wrath, OUR CHILD I saw!

A child no more!—harsh-browed and strong,
He towered a giant in the throng,
And down his shoulders, broad and bare,
Swept the black terror of his hair.

He raised his arm; he smote amain;
As round the reaper falls the grain,
So the dark host around him fell,
So sank the foes of Israel!

Again I looked. In sunlight shone
The towers and domes of Askelon.
Priest, warrior, slave, a mighty crowd,
Within her idol temple bowed.

Yet one knelt not; stark, gaunt, and blind,
His arms the massive pillars twined,—
An eyeless captive, strong with hate,
He stood there like an evil Fate.

The red shrines smoked,—the trumpets pealed:
He stooped,—the giant columns reeled,—
Reeled tower and fane, sank arch and wall,
And the thick dust-cloud closed o'er all!

I.

THE NAZIRITE.

1. No man could have had a better start than Samson. The account of his birth begins by saying that "the children of Israel had done evil," and the Lord had in consequence "delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years." Well might they ask, Where is our Joshua, and the victory, and the kingdom, and the power? It was then that the angel of the Lord appeared to the wife of Manoah, promising that to her, though barren, a child beyond nature should be given of God; but requiring the strict

dedication of herself from that time, and of her son from his birth, as a Nazirite to God—one set apart and separate by a strict consecration to Himself.

¶ Where God is steadfastly desired and worshipped; where the language of the heart is "What is His will?" "What wilt Thou have me do?"; where there is the constant desire to be like Him—there is consecration. Where consecration is, there will be the realization of God's presence. We may rely upon it that where one resolutely sets God before the soul as the object of desire, adoration, and obedience, there God will become a living reality. He will reveal Himself without doubt to such, and His presence will come to surround the soul. And there will be joy. That is to say, the sure fruit of consecration, like the fruit of the Spirit, is joy. We do not always regard the matter in this light. We are disposed to speak of the duty of consecration—the duty of setting apart substance or self to the use and service of God, and it is a duty, the rightful claim of God upon us. What we are apt to forget is that duty where it is discharged always comes to wear the robes of gladness and is apparelled in celestial light. That is especially true of our duty to God. In keeping His commandments there is great reward.[1]

2. The Nazirite vow had of course a deep religious meaning: it meant that the person who adopted it sacrificed himself to the Lord. The Nazirite shunned all defilement from contact with the dead—even when those dead were the nearest relatives—in order to represent and remind himself of the purity which should be the law of his life. He drank no wine or strong drink, partly to express his separation from general society, and partly as a public symbol of religious asceticism.

¶ The true place of asceticism in Christianity is never to be an end in itself, but only a means to an end. Manichæanism, and all kindred systems of thought, which regard matter, and therefore the body, as intrinsically evil, tend to make asceticism an end in itself. They view the body, with all its appetites, as an enemy, to be as far as possible destroyed, and consequently attach a positive merit to its destruction; further encouraging the morbid tendency that is sometimes found in human nature to take a voluptuous delight in pain. The revolting austerities of the Indian fakirs are, of course, the best-known examples of these perverse opinions, which, for all their wonderful exhibition

[1] C. Brown, in *Youth and Life*, 202.

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of endurance, degrade instead of elevating human nature. And there can be no question but that Christian practice has, often in its history, been contaminated and compromised by the taint of these Eastern ideas. But, for all this, there is a distinctively Christian asceticism which moves upon a far higher plane, and is enjoined by Christ Himself. "If any man will come after me," He says, "let him deny himself," importing an ascetic element at the outset into every Christian life. Christian asceticism is primarily prudential. It springs from no under-estimate of the goodness of God's creation, but simply from the recognition of man's tendency to sin, and consequent need for the avoidance of temptation. He cannot trust himself, and so he must fly. But the man who feels this must be humbled by the feeling. Hence the Christian ascetic is as far removed as possible from all thought of accumulating merit by his austerities. They result expressly from his demerit, and are a perpetual reminder of its existence.[1]

3. Samson, it is easy to see, must have been, in practice, an indifferent Nazirite at certain periods of his career; but his inconsistencies did not ruin his work so long as he was not unfaithful to its central idea: and so long as his hair was uncut he felt that his life was a consecrated life, and that he must keep its high purpose in view. Those seven locks of hair as they floated in the breeze taught other Israelites what to expect of him, and they rebuked in his own conscience all in his life that was not in keeping with the Nazirite law. And accordingly the preternatural gift of great physical strength was attached to this one particular of the Nazirite observance, which did duty as a symbol for all the rest, and upon the careful maintenance of which fidelity to the general principle of a consecrated life would appear to have depended.

¶ The vow of the Nazirite was essentially a vow to abstain from fleshly lusts. He was to hold himself pure as God's instrument; he was not to yield his members unto evil; he was to nurture his life in Spartan severity and simplicity; he was to attain self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, and from that discipline his whole body and soul were to derive strength. Without any disparagement of the character of Samson, one may fairly say that his keeping of the Nazirite vow had all along been

[1] J. R. Illingworth, *Christian Character*, 46.

marked by adherence that was letter-perfect rather than spiritually faithful. He had been temperate in the direction of his vow.

> Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
> Which many a famous warrior overturns,
> Thou could'st repress; nor did the dancing ruby,
> Sparkling, out-pour'd, the flavour, or the smell,
> Or taste that cheers the hearts of gods and men,
> Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.

But in that direction only. In others he had been weak.

The Nazirite vow, rightly understood, was a divinely-given basis for moral development, a prophecy through outer separateness of spiritual consecration. Nor could any man be said to have drunk of its spirit who rested in the details of ritual, and did not seek to penetrate to its essence—consecration to God.

II.

The Gift of Strength.

1. Samson grew up in the belief that he was consecrated to God, that there was a definite, divinely-appointed work for him to do, and that God would endow him for that work with all the necessary strength. "And the child grew," we are told, "and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan." Of Joshua we read that by the hands of Moses he was filled with the spirit of wisdom for his great leadership; but this was not the case with Samson; he was moved by the Spirit to great miracles of strength, but there was no wisdom to guide a nation, or indeed his own steps. His gift from "the Spirit of the Lord" was simply physical strength, and it was associated with the defects of his qualities. His passions were strong, and apparently uncontrolled. He had no moral elevation or religious fervour. To help to preserve his race from the contamination of Philistine intercourse was the ambition of Samson's youth, and the final ideal to which he dedicated himself in death—the highest patriotism possible to the Hebrews at the time. Yet he does not seem to have attempted to organize any general effort to throw off the Philistine yoke; his course was in this very unlike that of Gideon, or Jephthah, or Barak. He acted

alone, as if he could calculate on no help from others, or would even have been embarrassed by it.

His gift was not of the highest kind. It was far below that of other judges in Israel, and it did not produce any great results; the country was never emancipated by his single-handed desultory blows; nevertheless, he did, and did earnestly, what lay in him to do, and it served some purpose. At times, and in certain places, amongst his father's tombs and amidst the recollections of his father's exploits, Samson was moved by the Spirit, and for a time would be filled with spiritual enthusiasm; and then again he would relapse into lazy, self-indulgent ways, a prey to every evil power. So he never produced any impression on the people at large. His own countrymen, in spite of their admiration of his courage and wit, must have felt that he did the cause of Israel more harm than good. True, he was their champion, called of God; but he never seems to have acted as their leader; we do not know that he organized a single expedition, and he certainly never delivered his country.

2. Samson's chief value lay, perhaps, in the one inspiring thought which his prowess awakened—the thought that God was there. He simply crystallizes, in his titanic figure, the idea of strength through obedience to God. If by obedience to the mere vow of the Nazirite Samson was invincible, how invincible, as a nation and as a church, might Israel become if obedient to the whole moral law which God had given her. By the happy though unnatural strength of this Nazirite the Hebrews were taught to stand in reverence before Jehovah, and to seek for help again in Him by disobeying whom all their disasters had been brought about.

¶ Who is the strong man? Is he the man who passes through society with the battle-axe of Richard Cœur de Lion? The child sees a man lift a great weight with his teeth, and at once he exclaims, What a strong man! Is the child right? He would have been right had he said, What a strong animal! Such poor power wastes itself day by day; the man's teeth perish, where is the giant then? Here are two men under circumstances of equal provocation: the one man instantly resents the insult which has been inflicted upon him; in a moment he is in a paroxysm of rage, asserting his dignity, and smiting his opponent; men who are standing by admire the fire of his character; they say, What a

strong man! The other man shows no sign of rage, holds himself in the severest self-control; instead of resisting evil, he answers not again, and persons who look only on the surface of things declare him a coward. Solomon would have declared him a strong man, and so would Jesus Christ. The strength of manhood is to be judged by the depth and solidity of moral foundation.[1]

Love alone is great in might,
Makes the heavy burden light,
Smooths rough ways to weary feet,
Makes the bitter morsel sweet:
Love alone is strength!

Might that is not born of Love
Is not Might born from above
Has its birthplace down below
Where they neither reap nor sow:
Love alone is strength!

Love is stronger than all force,
Is its own eternal source;
Might is always in decay,
Love grows fresher every day:
Love alone is strength![2]

III.

The Riddle.

1. A love affair first brought Samson into active opposition to the Philistines. Attracted by a Philistine woman at Timnath, he insisted on his parents obtaining her as his wife. They expostulated, but the wayward son would not be thwarted, and, as is the way in the East, the marriage was arranged by the parents. A higher hand was guiding events; a reference even in Samson's mind indicated that "it was of the Lord," that, through the wedding, occasion against the dominant Philistines would be found. It was found in a train of consequences from one incident.

2. On the way to Timnath, Samson's supernatural strength was shown. A young lion in the vineyards of Timnath "roared

[1] Joseph Parker.

[2] George MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, ii. 130.

against him." Samson, without a weapon, "rent him as he would have rent a kid," and left the carcase in the way. On a later visit he found a swarm of bees had taken possession of the carcase. The honey, which he took and ate, suggested the famous riddle which he propounded to the Philistines at his marriage, giving them seven days to answer it, and promising as a prize thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments;—

"Out of the eater came forth meat,
Out of the strong came forth sweetness."

The riddle proved impossible, but the Philistine guests with threats persuaded the bride to extract the answer from her husband. Samson could not withstand the feminine argument of tears, and told the answer, which was promptly passed on to the guests. So on the seventh day the triumphant rejoinder came—

"What is sweeter than honey?
What is stronger than a lion?"

Samson knew that his wife had been false to him and that the story of his adventure was out. Then with a daring quite as notable as that with which he had killed the lion, he hurried to Ashkelon, another Philistine city, and soon returned with the garments of thirty men whom he had slain, with which he redeemed his pledge.

3. The story reads at first like mere rude jesting and bloody sport. It is clear, however, that under cover of his riddle Samson meant to intimate to his foes themselves the defiance that was already burning within him. In the honey from the carcase of the lion which he had slain he had seen a Divine omen of the blessing that was to come even out of the oppressor of Israel, and with the recklessness which was part of his character he intimated vaguely, even to the wedding guests, what they and their countrymen might expect from him. He was going to tear this Philistine lion in pieces and gather from its slain carcase honey for his people Israel; and the thirty men, lying dead at Ashkelon, were but the beginning of the slaughter which would befall her foes.

4. Samson came back to Timnath to find his wife given to another, and he revenged himself by the fantastic malice of turn-

ing three hundred foxes with fire-brands tied to their tails among the standing corn of the Philistines. The Philistines executed a sort of wild justice upon the intended wife of Samson and her father by burning them both with fire, hoping perhaps that this would stop further reprisals. But Samson retaliated by smiting them, "hip and thigh," with a great slaughter. He then retired to a natural stronghold, the rock of Etam, in Judah.

The Philistines "spread themselves in Lehi," and demanded the surrender of the fugitive; and to their demand the men of Judah pusillanimously consented. Instead of putting themselves under Samson's leadership, they only urged weakly, "Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?" Samson consented to be given up to the Philistines, bound with two new cords. But the exultant shout of his enemies at receiving the captive was soon turned to the groans of the dying, for "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire." Seizing as an impromptu weapon the jawbone of an ass, the champion, in a religious frenzy, rushed upon the astonished captors, and slew "heaps upon heaps" of them. The place bore afterwards the name Ramath-lehi ("hill of the jaw-bone"). Overcome with thirst, he prayed for refreshment, and God "clave an hollow place that was in Lehi, and there came water thereout." The name En-hakkore ("well of him that called") preserved the memory of his deliverance.

It is immediately after the events thus related that the words, "He judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years," are inserted. We may infer from this notice that the effects of the exploit at Lehi was such that the Philistine power, though still dominant, was held in check, that relief from the pressure hitherto felt was realized, and that a measure of authority was conceded to Samson.

¶ In Watts's picture, the young knight of God sits down on a rock after his terrible encounter with the Philistines, whose dead bodies lie in heaps around him. The jawbone with which he has slain them lies white and polished at his feet, its blood-stains having been cleansed by the stream that flows from it to quench his burning thirst. He is weary and worn-out with his stupendous exertions. The Spirit of the Lord that had come upon

him and given him the prowess of a thousand men has departed, and he suffers the sad reaction of such high excitement. He feels the weakness of his will to hold his strong passions in leash. He feels that though he could wrestle with and rend asunder the young lion, with no weapon but his naked hand, he cannot wrestle with and subdue his own wild, ungoverned desires. The chains of his own easily besetting lusts bind his spirit stronger far than the withes and cords of the Philistines round his mighty thews.[1]

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Life-Work of G. F. Watts*, 160.

SAMSON.

II.

The Profanation of Strength.

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The Profanation of Strength.

And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times, and shake myself. But he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.—Judg. xvi. 20.

Samson had come to middle life, not a faultless Adonis by any means, but a man who in the main had loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and who certainly had held no truce with the principalities and powers of evil as he saw and knew them. Then he judged Israel for twenty years; and nothing is told of these middle years, perhaps because there was nothing to tell. It is not that the years were quiet and uneventful. It is not a case of the proverb "Happy is the country that has no history." It is that somehow or other he fell a victim to the fatal temptations of middle life; that he went into it with a soul and came out of it with little or none.

¶ A man frequently goes on imagining that the religious teaching with which he has been imbued in childhood is in full force in him, whereas there is not even a trace left of it.

S——, an intelligent and truthful man, told me how he came to stop believing. When he was twenty-six years old he once at a night's rest during the chase followed his old habit, acquired in his childhood, and stood up to pray. His elder brother, who took part in the chase, was lying on the hay and looking at him. When S—— got through and was about to lie down, he said to him: "So you are still doing these things?"

That was all that was said. And S—— that very day quit praying and attending church. Thirty years have passed since he stopped praying, receiving the communion, and going to church. Not that he knew the convictions of his brother and had joined them, not that he had decided on anything in his mind, but only because the sentence which his brother had uttered was like the pressure exerted with a finger against a wall which was ready to fall of its own weight; the sentence was merely an indication that where he thought there was faith there had long been a vacant spot, and that, therefore, the words which he spoke and the signs

of the cross and the obeisances which he made during his praying were quite meaningless actions. Since he had come to recognize their meaninglessness, he could not keep them up any longer.

Thus it has always been with an enormous majority of people. They are in that condition when the light of knowledge and of life has melted the artificial structure, and they have either noticed it and have cleared the place, or have not yet noticed it.[1]

The Philistine women continued to attract Samson. At Gaza this led to his being discovered by his enemies, and the town-gates were shut upon him. But Samson rose in the middle of the night, and, in that jesting humour of his, took hold of the brazen gates of the city, lifted them clean out, with the posts in which they were placed, carried them to the top of a neighbouring hill, and left them there. This, of course, added to the resentment of the Philistines against him, and helped to bring about the crisis in which he perished.

I.

Delilah.

1. The story of Delilah, either Philistine maiden or Hebrew maiden, is one of the most graphic in the pages of the Old Testament. Bribed by the lords of the Philistines to discover the secret of the champion's strength, at first her wiles were unavailing. Three times Delilah tried to draw from him the secret of his strength. Three times Samson drugged his own conscience by telling a lie to her. Yet he was so helpless in the coils of the temptress that he failed to rouse himself in defence of his own manhood. The man who dallies with temptation as Samson did is doomed. With unholy persistence Delilah made a supreme attempt to accomplish her ends. Asked the fourth time for the secret of his strength, Samson replied that if his locks were shorn his strength would be gone. The secret gained by so much deceit was immediately sold to the enemy. When a fourth time the challenge, "Samson! the Philistines be upon thee," fell on his heavy ears, he rose with a determination to display again his wonderful strength.

His virtue gone, his vow broken, he staggered out to grapple

[1] Tolstoy, *My Confession* (*Works*, xiii. 5).

with his foes, and he put forth his hands to fight, "for he wist not that the Lord was departed from him"; but the unhappy man found that his great power had gone from him. He handled himself as in the times past, but nothing came of it. He was powerless. His foes did as they pleased with him. They put out his eyes! They bound his ponderous limbs with fetters of brass, thrust him into a prison-house, and forced him to grind at their machines! He was a God-deserted man.

It is one of the most pathetic pictures of the Bible. Job sitting on the ash-heap and cursing the day of his birth has less of tragedy in it. Jeremiah bemoaning the lost condition of his beloved land, sad as is the sight, almost reaches the sublime of pathos; but great Samson, fighting himself, putting his defunct forces into line only to find himself utterly beaten and wholly ruined, is a sight to stir the pity of God and men.

¶ Burns, Sheridan, Béranger, and many another, are sad illustrations of the spirit of self-indulgence. Now and again we hear of a sudden judgment overtaking those whom nature has made very attractive by the gift of a sunny, bright disposition, and varied powers of the Spirit. They have used their popularity to press home the gospel of God—men like Samson, of wit and humour, faith and spiritual insight, and at times capable of great religious enthusiasm. For a time their name and what they accomplish is in everyone's mouth; and then there is an ugly rumour, a hurried flight, and the man is known no more. Religious people are perplexed. Was he not a consecrated man and under vows? Did he not at times sweep men off their feet by the exercise of his gifts? What then means this fall? It means that he never mastered himself, was never really under discipline. He controlled part of his nature, but not the whole; never really distinguished between liberty and licence; whilst rejoicing in the wonderful truths of the gospel which he taught with such power and abundance of illustration, yet in the meantime he allowed the enemy to creep in and take the citadel.[1]

> Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport
> Her importunity, each time perceiving
> How openly, and with what impudence
> She purpos'd to betray me; and (which was worse
> Than undissembl'd hate) with what contempt
> She sought to make me traitor to myself:

[1] G. H. S. Walpole, *Personality and Power*, 148.

Yet the fourth time, when mustring all her wiles,
With blandisht parlies, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
To storm me over-watch't, and wearied out,
At times when men seek most repose and rest,
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart;
Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd,
Might easily have shook off all her snares:
But foul effeminacy held me yok't
Her bond-slave; O indignity, O blot
To honour and religion! servile mind,
Rewarded well with servile punishment!
The base degree to which I now am fall'n,
These rags, this grinding, is not yet so base
As was my former servitude, ignoble,
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
That saw not how degenerately I serv'd.[1]

2. Twenty years have passed since Samson, endowed with superhuman powers, began his judgeship. Yet by his strength and his courage, by his battles, his jokes, and his various activities, he has accomplished practically nothing of the task he had been appointed to perform, the task to which he had deliberately dedicated his life. Near the close of the twenty years Samson himself is lying supine upon the breast of the ablest, the most patriotic, and the most fascinating of Philistine women. Surely something must be wrong; something for which not Delilah alone is responsible; something which cannot be explained by the theory of a moment's amiable weakness in Samson himself.

When Samson yielded to an irrational impulse and revealed his secret, he only did once more what he had been doing all his life. He had been entrusted with an important mission. He had been furnished with abilities adequate to its demands. He was allowed twenty years to complete his work. Instead of setting himself to do it like a man, because it was given him to do, he worked only when the impulse seized him—when it was therefore easier for him to work than to play. Thus even the right things he did trained him steadily to be more and more the slave of his impulses; and when at last the impulse to do wrong came upon

[1] Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, line 396 ff.

him, he obeyed it precisely as an untrained cat scratches, and an untrained horse kicks. That fact explains why the magnificent Samson was at last compelled to grind meal in the mills of his enemies, though the sordid and servile Jacob came in due time to be the prince of Israel.

¶ There must be moral as well as physical strength. There must be the courage that stands to its convictions, whatever people may think or say. The hardest mouth to face is not the cannon's. It is rather that from whose throat comes the insistent roar of the fickle populace. The majestic strength of royal manhood treats this as an elephant does a fly. There are temptations to be resisted. Nothing short of moral strength suffices for this. Innumerable iniquities solicit tolerance or indulgence, and, if yielded to, they will damn here as well as hereafter. Strength means moral courage, and ability to stand against ridicule and popular clamour. Strength is not like the willow that bends low to every breeze, but rather like the oak that stands stiff in the tempest, or like the granite cliff against which the mad sea dashes itself to pieces, or like the mountains that lift their calm faces toward the silent stars defiant of all the bluff of storm. This is what it means to be strong, and before such a life the world makes way. Strong in purpose and strong in action; strong within and strong without; strong against foes that are seen and strong against foes that are unseen; all the way up and all the way down, all the way round and all the way through; first, last and always—strong! It needs neither title nor crown to argue the imperial majesty of such manhood.[1]

> Whom have I to complain of but myself?
> Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
> In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,
> Under the seal of silence could not keep,
> But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
> O'ercome with importunity and tears.
> O impotence of mind, in body strong!
> But what is strength, without a double share
> Of wisdom? vast, unwieldy, burdensome,
> Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
> By weakest subtleties; not made to rule,
> But to subserve where wisdom bears command.
> God, when He gave me strength, to show withal
> How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.[2]

[1] J. I. Vance, *Royal Manhood*, 34.

[2] Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, line 47 ff.

II.

Revenge.

1. Blinded by the Philistines, Samson began to recover inward sight. Slowly, no doubt, but surely, the old vow renewed itself in his soul. It had been almost his first consciousness; it should be his last. He would never again "see the sights that dazzle"; but there was still opportunity to see the face of God, whose fiery pillar of truth is given to our night-time. The day of Samson's disgrace was nevertheless his day of grace also, and God lengthened it out; disgrace of man, grace of God. His fall had meant the humiliation of his people; if he could recover their freedom how gladly would he die, and, dying, save Israel and expiate his sin. He was a patriot once again, with a patriotism purged of the dross of ambition and self-interest. The Philistines saw him bent, and old, and blind as he ground at the prison mill; but they never suspected, nor would they have believed, that his soul was growing young again.

2. At last came the day of his revenge and of his death together. His hair had grown again, and one day he was brought out by his tormentors to make sport before them at a great festival in honour of Dagon, and there he found his opportunity. The poor blinded hero went into the temple, stumbling, and laughed at as he stumbled; he was jeered and mocked; he was dazed and broken-hearted. But suddenly his ear caught that mocking song of praise to Dagon, which exalted Dagon as the conqueror of Jehovah and of Samson. And the inspiration came to him: still his name is associated with that of Jehovah; and they are mocking, not him, but Jehovah! Like an echo from the past there came to him that strange movement in his soul, a sense of the Divine *afflatus*, an inspiration, a dim consciousness that his strength had returned to him; and then the swift resolve. If only he could do one deed that would undo the injury that he had done to Jehovah and Jehovah's people. No place so fit for the confession of his new faith and his recovered youth as the heathen temple, no occasion so opportune as the idol feast. "O Lord God of Israel, remember me." The strength of the Nazirite is upon

him; the old convictions surge through him, till his whole being is flooded with the tide of sacred passion. One sees him erect at last in the dignity of his new-won manhood, his face fronting the mocking faces that he could not see—Samson Agonistes! with the power of the Lord upon him gathering soul and sinew for his final testimony against the idol-house and all the accursed influences of the place. Imagination sees it still—the tragic, stately form bowing itself against the central pillar, the shuddering building, the gaping roof, the appalling avalanche of wood and stone. So Samson's vow was kept.

¶ There was splendid promise in Samson's opening manhood. He had the perfection of youthful beauty and strength. But he fell very low and dragged his honour in the mire. And yet he has still upon his bare head the shock of untouched hair which is the sign of the Nazirite vow, the pledge that he is upheld by God and endowed with power above his own, and consecrated to the Divine service from his mother's womb. And this gives him an inward strength to go through his dread probation, deprived of strength and eyesight, in the lowest deeps of darkness and wretchedness, till his hair begins to grow again, and he feels some mysterious stir of returning power, and is nerved to the supreme effort, the tremendous self-immolation, in which he avenges his own hapless fate, and delivers his country. Through faith he obtains in the end that gleam of hope, from beyond death, which rests upon his grave.[1]

> To Israel
> Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them
> Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;
> To himself and father's house eternal fame;
> And which is best and happiest yet, all this
> With God not parted from him, as was fear'd,
> But favouring and assisting to the end.
> Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
> Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
> Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,
> And what may quiet us in a death so noble.[2]

3. How beautifully the quiet close of the story follows the stormy scene of the riotous assembly and the sudden destruction.

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Life-Work of G. F. Watts*, 161.
[2] Milton, *Samson Agonistes*, line 1714 ff.

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